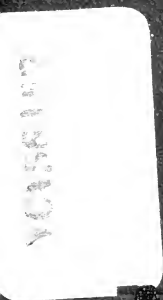
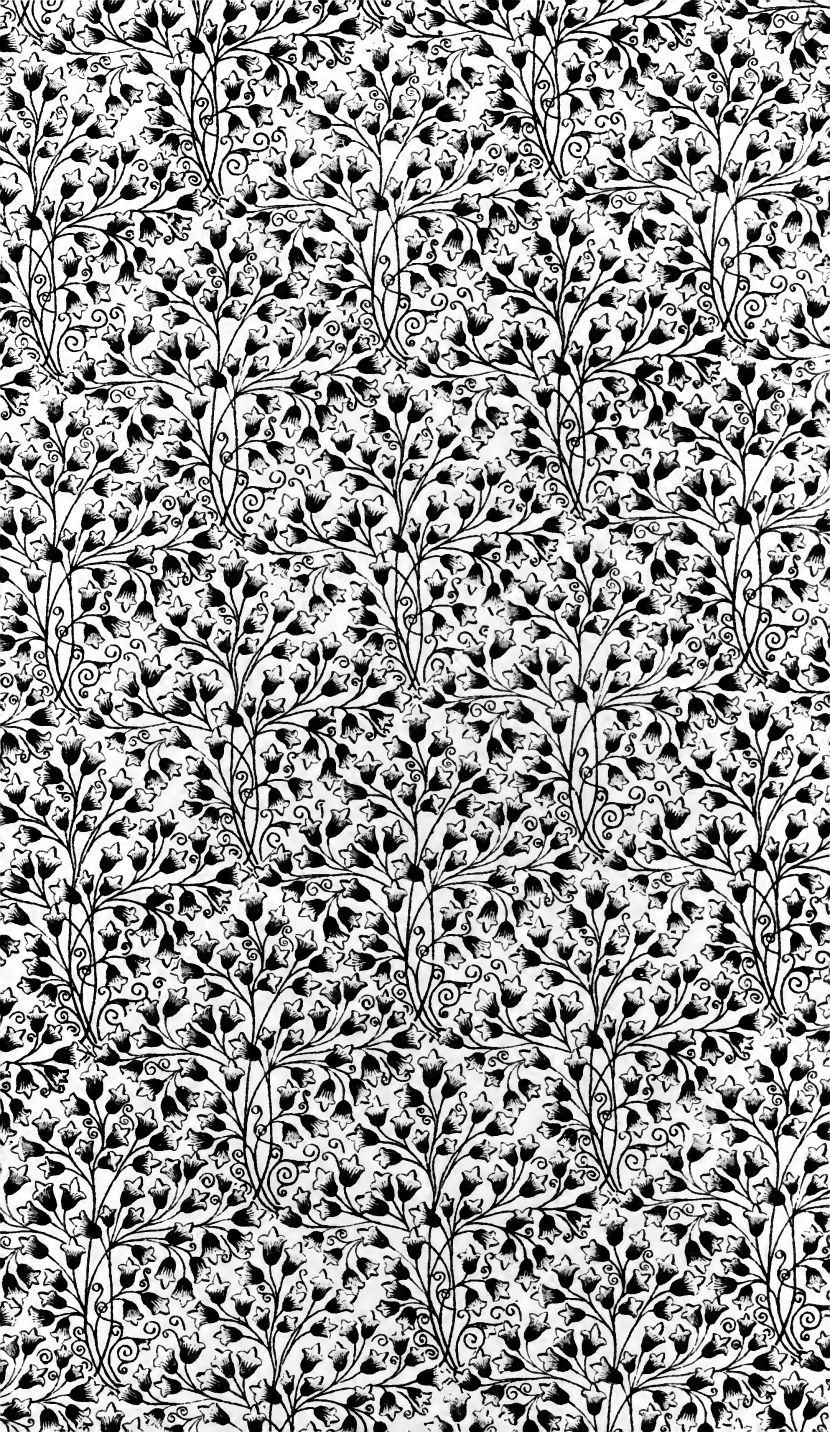


ZULULU  
THE MAID OF ANAHUAC  
FOSTER







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Josie Hunt









# ZULULU

## THE MAID OF ANAHUAC

BY

HANNA A. FOSTER

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G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

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TO VIRGIL  
AND JULIA



## INTRODUCTION.

THE masterly epic which celebrates the abduction of a beautiful woman, and the induction of a wooden horse, is no longer a series of myths. Its essential verities have at length been established in the priceless exhumations of the antiquarian.

The sunny lands of the Americas teem with buried evidences of a civilization which in its attendant triumphs of war and peace, and in the intensity of its loves and hates, perhaps no Homeric character could excel.

Many theories have been evolved from the speculations of the savant as to the anthropology of the successive American races which have come and gone. But no Homer or Virgil has seen fit to commemorate their heroic deeds and the tender passion of love indigenous to every clime and race and heart.

The author, while claiming no classic excellence, has patiently studied so much of the history, rites, and customs of the Mayas, Nahuas, and Toltecs

as is attainable, and selecting the golden era of peaceful progress betwixt the gruesome periods reddened with human sacrifices, has sought to sing a tale of passion, tragedy, and romance consistent with the chronology, fact, and tradition of which it is a part.

Ancient Mexico and Xibalba had their Oribos and Zululus, as well as their culture heroes, with whom the indulgent reader will become acquainted.

H. A. F.





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## ZULULU, THE MAID OF ANAHUAC.

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### CANTO I.

#### ANAHUAC.

**I**N days of eld, that yesterday  
Lost from the calendar, away  
Behind the centuries gray and grand  
Lay westerly the sunlit land  
Of Anahuac,<sup>1</sup> whose mountains bold,  
White-hooded chroniclers grown old,  
Stood up in heaven's eternal calm  
And challenged time.

A land of balm,  
And bloom, and song, and murmuring rills,  
Cool crystal lakes, and vales, and hills  
With grassy slopes where sunshine played ;  
Of unhewn forests ripe with shade  
Far stretching like a sombre sea,  
Intense with depth and mystery—

The haunt of life so free and wild  
 That Nature wondered at her child.  
 A land the very gods did love  
 What time they lifted her above  
 The fevered zone to healthful heights,  
 And crowned her with untold delights.<sup>2</sup>

Here, dwelt in olden pomp and power,  
 The gallant chief Oxac,<sup>3</sup> the flower  
 Of chieftancy. With dauntless heart,  
 Alert, and skilled in war's red art,  
 Of balanced brain and nervy hand,  
 A man to counsel, lead, command.  
 Though many hundred moons had shed  
 Their silver on his princely head,  
 His stalwart form was all unbent  
 As when to earliest war he went  
 A stripling brave ; his keen, black eye  
 Undimmed, still read the lettered sky  
 And marked the planets as they beat  
 Their azure rounds with shining feet  
 To score the cycles in their flight  
 On mile-stones of primeval night.

A double nature his ; though mild  
 As zephyr's breath, yet fierce and wild  
 As hurricane that plucks the oak,  
 Or fells a forest by his stroke.  
 A man of subtile, sudden moods,  
 Who forth to abstract solitudes  
 Would oft compel his noble heart



From human sympathy apart,  
Withdraw within himself, content  
With narrowest environment  
If but the world might be shut out,  
The gods shut in with thoughts devout  
And questioning. But when again  
Came Oxac to the life of men,  
The world of duty, beauty, sense,  
Bore impress of omnipotence ;  
Affairs of state, love's gentle call,  
He noted, heard, and heeded all.  
His soul absorbed the warm delights  
Of summer lands, all sounds, all sights,  
At glow of noon, or twilight dim,  
Were marvellously sweet to him.

He swayed the power of felt command,  
Held justice's scales with steady hand,  
Marked with exactness each offence,  
Its gravity and recompense,  
And dealt with prompt relentless fate,  
The awful penalties of state.\*

Of royal birth, with rightful claim  
To rich inheritance of name,  
Ancestral wealth, and power and pride,  
Yet would he often turn aside  
With Nature, when like dreams of night  
The shadows melted into light,  
And new-born day, baptized with charms,  
Sprang joyous from her gracious arms.

At noontide hour he sought her, far  
From life's distracting noise and jar,  
For converse sweet ; and when the gray  
Of twilight veiled the weary day,  
Adown her evening avenues  
O'erhung with stars and paved with dews  
Full oft he followed.

Nature spells  
Her laws by easy syllables  
To those who trace o'er pages white  
Her index finger tipped with light.  
A pupil apt, he understood  
Her whispers in the solemn wood,  
Her sighs among the mountain pines,  
Her breathings 'mid the valley vines,  
All paths her foot was wont to press ;  
He heard the rustle of her dress  
As through the golden maize she sped,  
And touched his lips, and bowed his head.

Yet more ; his will was held in thrall ;  
His soul was full of worship ; all  
Her mighty forces meekly bent  
Before the gods ' omnipotent  
Who gave the sunshine and the shower,  
And victory in the doubtful hour  
Of conflict, or with vengeance dire  
Sent tempest, pestilence and fire,  
With sore disaster. To appease  
The rage of angry deities

And hold their favor, Oxac reared  
Full many a temple, and well steered  
His craft of state through calm and swell,  
By faith's unquestioned oracle.

The valley held in warm embrace  
A pretty lake with dimpled face  
O'er which the rippling laughter skipped,  
Where song-birds from her fresh lips sipped  
Love's liquid melodies, which made  
An Eden of the sylvan shade.

From hidden homes among the hills,  
Came prattling down the merry rills,  
O'er shining sands and pebbles white,  
Fair wantons, dancing with delight.

From distant northland, calm and strong,  
A river rolled ; with bloom and song  
The margin meadows sought to stay  
The steadfast pilgrim on his way ;  
He tarried not ; within his soul  
Eternal purpose held control,  
While deep-toned voices from the sea  
Urged onward to his destiny.

Like some huge giant in repose,  
His heaving breast o'erspread with snows,  
In slumbers ominous and deep,  
Now shivering, talking in his sleep,

Old Popocatepetl \* lay,  
His knees enwrapped with green and gray  
Thick-woven, and his hoary head  
High-pillowed and cloud-canopied.

Low at his feet among the flowers,  
Were villages with walls and towers,  
And busy throngs who spun and wrought  
Life's wondrous web of deed and thought.<sup>7</sup>  
Ho, weavers of that long ago,  
What word for us ?

“ 'T is well to know  
As flies the shuttle to and fro  
The pattern grows, and not in vain  
Does patience hold the tangled skein,—  
A break, a knot in thread of gold  
Will mar the web a thousand-fold.”

The royal city Iztapac \*  
Rose in her beauty from the wreck  
Of one despoiled ; more proud perchance,  
Because of direful circumstance  
Which shook the olden city down,  
But left a name, and fair renown,  
And broad foundations, hers at length,  
Her polished stepping-stones to strength.

Within this city Oxac built  
His palace home, o'erlaid with gilt  
The ceilings of its massive halls,  
And covered lustrous floors and walls

With legends writ in picture words,  
Of gods and heroes, serpents, birds,  
And characters of strange designs  
Described by geometric lines,  
All chronicled in colors ' sure ;  
And every room had garniture  
Of regal opulence and ease.

Soft swung the door-way draperies,  
Their silvery fringes flashing back  
Bright glances on the zephyr's track—  
The zephyr, that in wanton mood  
Oft floated from the odorous wood  
The palace seeking, and beguiled  
By gentle breathings of the child  
Zululu,<sup>10</sup> lingered while she slept,  
Nor thought o'er long the watch he kept.

Zululu was the chieftain's pride,  
His only child ; he could not hide  
His heart from her whose winsome grace  
Would chase the care-cloud from his face,  
And light his eye—she could but know  
It was because he loved her so.  
Ten summers in her path had strewn  
Their blossoms, and ten times had flown ;  
A little maiden full of glee,  
And happy all the day was she ;  
As lightsome as the gay gazelle  
That bounds along his native dell

'Neath Afric skies, and questioning  
All things for joy—and everything  
Returned glad answer ; thus she grew  
Beloved, and beautiful, and true ;  
Her heart as tuneful and unstirred  
By thought of ill, as May-time bird  
That cleaves the blue. When from the chase  
Oxac returned, her glad young face  
First met him with its greeting fair,  
The sunset's gold upon her hair,<sup>11</sup>  
And wealth of sparkles in her eyes,  
As dancing down the galleries  
In gay apparel, on his sight  
She flashed, a vision of delight.

Companions they, in fields and bowers,  
Together learned the names of flowers,  
Their lovely natures and designs,  
The while for consecrated shrines  
Zululu many a garland bound,  
With reverent love, unfearing crowned  
Her temple gods. But when her hands  
Grew weary, and on fragrant bands  
Lay folded, Oxac would retell  
Some wonder story, woven well  
Of legendary thread spun out  
From years forgotten, wound about  
By weird ideals, but with form  
Defying cataclysmal storm,  
Which stood above the misty sea  
As traced upon eternity.

LEGEND OF CHOLULA.<sup>12</sup>

Far away in the past, in the beginning,  
Ere the light of the sun had been created,  
Lifeless, and void, and dark with desolation,  
A dreary waste, by boundless seas surrounded,  
Lay this fair land, the home of the Nahuas.<sup>13</sup>  
At length arose the sun and scattered darkness.  
Then was the land possessed by men gigantic,  
With faces terrible, and forms distorted,  
Who stalked abroad and looked with eyes audacious  
Upon the sun—his rising and his setting,  
And said, "Lo, we will seek him in his chamber";  
Then some swift-footed toward the far west journeyed,  
And others eastward, yet were all turned backward  
By the wide sea. Then came they to Cholula  
And built a mighty tower with summit lifted  
To touch the sky. "Now in his unveiled beauty,  
In matchless glory bathed, shall we behold him."  
Their impious words heard the Great Heart of  
Heaven,  
And to the dwellers of the heights celestial  
Out spoke with mighty voice: "Come and confound them!  
Earthborn, they build of clay with hands polluted,  
A highway to the heavens. Amazing folly!"  
Like lightnings fierce, down swept the starry  
legions  
And smote the tower with terrible destruction,

Each man in speech made alien to his fellow,  
And scattered swift and wide the wicked builders,  
Whose deeds Cholulan ruins scarce remember,  
Whose names Cholulan ruins have forgotten.

Long time intent, the dark-eyed child  
Would listen, led through mazes wild  
To many a wonder-land remote  
From modern thought, her magic boat  
Wide waters sailing toward green shores,  
Where dimpled hands might drop their oars,  
And softly anchor to the past  
An atom in that misty vast !  
With foot untired, and vision clear,  
She breathed the marvellous atmosphere  
Of deluged worlds, and races lost,  
And paths primeval darkly crossed  
By fate. Yet had she greed of good.  
She loved and better understood  
The story of the god <sup>14</sup> benign,  
Whose name and virtues all divine  
So charmed her that the pure and true  
Into her very being grew ;  
While thoughts that knew no form of speech  
Grew restless with desire to reach  
New altitudes, where questions find  
Plain answers. For each human mind  
Instinctive tries its pinioned wings,  
And each, in touch with unseen things  
Is neighbor to his fellow : Where ?  
It matters not ; that vital air



Inbreathed at birth, all life inspires—  
Through all gradations ; its desires,  
Ambitions, loves, hates, hopes, and fears,  
To all climes native, through all years  
Immortal.

Love did so unite  
The chieftain and his child ! his might  
Zululu crowned and glorified  
With all a daughter's trust and pride.  
Her simple plays he stooped to share,  
Her wishes were his sacred care ;  
However oft, his hour of rest  
Invading with the fair request,  
'T was Oxac's pleasure to repeat  
The story that she deemed so sweet.

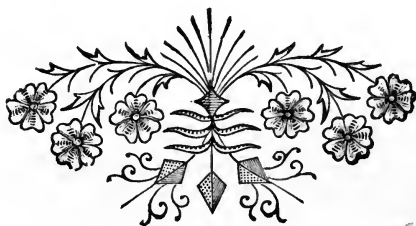
LEGEND OF QUETZALCOATLE.<sup>16</sup>

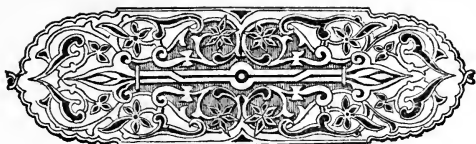
From the far east—from Hue-Hue-Tlaplan,<sup>16</sup>  
Came the Divine One, God of the Nahuas,  
The Plumed Serpent, guardian of his people,  
Who brought the golden maize to Tamoanchan,<sup>17</sup>  
In furrows long did hide the seeds of plenty,  
And bid the gentle south winds breathe above  
them,  
The vernal showers, life giving, drop their fulness,  
Till woke, and rose, and in the sunshine ripened  
Abundant harvests, making glad our fathers.  
Great was their god, beneficent and gentle.  
With holy hands he cleansed their bloody altars

And made them pure and bright with fruits and  
flowers,  
Empurpled clusters, eglantines, magnolias ;  
From mountain pines their gums, and from the  
valley  
Vanilla odoriferous, and spices.  
Then fled from Anahuac war, want, and famine,  
Nor found in all the land a habitation,  
Because the God of Peace—the Plumèd Serpent,  
By virtuous precepts, and divine behavior,  
Made wise the people, in all arts benignant ;  
Taught them to fill their store-rooms with abundance,  
Enlarge their villages, and build great cities ;  
To feed with unstained hands their sacred fires  
And worship worthily the Heart of Heaven.

Above the ruins of that impious tower,  
Hurled earthward by the mighty sky god mad-  
dened,  
The brave Nahuas in their hero's honor  
Built this eternal temple of Cholula,  
Where we, proud children of a race illustrious,  
His shrines enwreath with flowers of fond affection,  
And burn sweet incense on his sacred altars,  
Till he shall come again from far Tlapala—  
That unknown and mysterious country, whither  
In a canoe of serpent skins embarking  
He sailed away, leaving his happy kingdom,  
His palaces of turquoise, gold, and silver,

His pyramidal temple, and his people—  
For so the feverish draught of Tulla<sup>18</sup> prompted.  
But by and by shall ope the gates of morning,  
From distant northland, waters wide recrossing,  
Shall come to Anahuac the Plumèd Serpent,  
The God-King of our fathers, the Nahuas,  
To claim his kingdom prosperous and perpetual.





## CANTO II.

### THE ORACLE.

ONE night a foolish dream he had  
Which troubled Oxac ; though he bade  
The vision vanish at the dawn,  
It shadowed him—would not be gone.  
The dream was this :

Deep in the wood,  
With spirit bold, and weapon good,  
He followed fearless and afar  
Through darksome wilds the jaguar ;  
So near at length his savage prize  
He saw the flash of deadly eyes  
From covert green ; alert, intent,  
His trusty bow the huntsman bent  
With skillful hand ; but ere was sped  
The eager arrow, o'er his head,  
From lowest perch of scraggy oak,  
An evil bird with dismal croak  
Surprised him ! thrice it circled low,  
Then rose, and with a voice of woe  
Flew straight to Iztapac, and through  
The palace window, bloom and dew

With black wing brushing, thence did wrest  
A pretty dove from sheltered nest,  
The which, with hoarse, defiant croak,  
He bore away.—So Oxac woke.

There was a priestess weird and old,  
Blind, wizened, bent, whose fingers cold  
And cramped the oracles could trace,  
With whom the gods talked face to face.  
The dream—it haunted Oxac's thought,  
And though he said "'T is naught, 't is naught,"  
The resolute assertion lent  
No mollient to his discontent,  
Which prompted to the sibyl's art,  
And deeming heavier on his heart  
The burden of a nameless dread  
Than direful dream interpreted,  
He rose, and from his chamber strode,  
Though half in scorn, to her abode,  
A grewsome den to night allied ;  
With reckless hand he drew aside  
The poison vines which wove across  
The door-way dim from sedgy fosse  
To bramble bold, and peering in  
Beheld her, and his peace to win  
Invoked with fitting gifts the shrine  
Of rites mysterious and divine,  
And prostrate, but with quickened sense,  
Gave all her wild words audience.

“ Before my eyes, without disguise,  
O chief, the vision lies :

“War, waste, and woe ; a foe, a foe,  
A kingdom’s overthrow !

“A tangled thread, the dead, the dead !  
A chieftain with bowed head.

“A knave, a knave ! a brave, a brave !  
Zululu weds her slave !”

Upspringing from the earth, he fled  
As chased by doom ; his stricken head  
By clammy palm upheld and pressed,  
His throbbing brain all wildernessed  
With tangled thought. The round old world  
Before him into chaos whirled ;  
The ground was treacherous to his tread,  
The atmosphere dispirited  
With suffocation, and the light  
Scorched his wild eyeballs into night.

His palace gained, he sought a nook  
In distant chamber, and betook  
Himself to battle. Fierce the strife  
Within his bosom.

“What were life  
To me and mine, if cruel fate  
Shall hurl us from this proud estate  
And rude barbarians trample down  
My people, city, and renown ?  
For this hath Oxac fearless fought  
His country’s deadliest battles—brought

Strange banners home, and victory ?  
So thus the gods reward him ! aye,  
For *this* his child—it shall not be !  
A curse upon the prophecy ! ”

Rage is a fearful tonic ! through  
His vigorous frame the fury flew.  
Of iron nerve, he seemed to stand  
Invincible, with clenched hand,  
And lips compressed, and eyes aglow  
With angry fires ; then to and fro  
His chamber paced. Not more enraged,  
The jungle tiger, captured, caged  
By bars invisible.

“ A fate  
He scorns, doth Oxac meekly wait ?  
Who stands ? Who ventures to fulfil  
Designs resisted by his will ? ”  
The impious words were scarcely said,  
When through an open window sped,  
As answering all, in echoes low,  
And sweet, and near, in rhythmic flow,  
The breath of music, and the name  
Of Oxac blent in proud acclaim.

“ Thy realm is broad and fair,  
Thy vassals sturdy and true ;  
About thee is wrapped the odorous air,  
And the skies above are blue.  
We have heard the fame  
Of thy mighty name

In our home by the far-away sea ;  
Come we with greeting to thee—to thee,  
Great Oxac."

Anear the window low he bent  
His ear, to catch the wonderment.

" Thy heart is warm and bold,  
Thy treasures gather no rust ;  
Thy temple shrines are garnished with gold,  
And thy gods are wise and just ;  
We have heard the fame  
Of thy mighty name  
Sung by the shells of our sweet south sea.  
Come we with greeting to thee—to thee,  
Great Oxac."

The spellbound chief in attitude  
Now upright stands—his brow bedewed  
By sudden drops—his maddened soul,  
As sprayed from God's baptismal bowl,  
In reverent silence reconciled,  
Subdued in spirit as a child.  
His evil mood had taken flight  
And left him in a strange delight,  
His good stout heart, in weak amaze,  
Quite vanquished by the breath of praise.

" Thy hand is strong and brave,  
It gathereth fame from far ;  
Thy praises are echoed in coral cave,  
And sung in the morning star.



'T is a deathless song,  
We have heard it long ;  
For it floateth o'er mountain and sea ;  
Bring we a greeting—a message to thee,  
Great Oxac."

Within the palace Oxac brought  
His courtly visitors, and wrought  
Prompt hospitality and fair,  
With princely hand, and gracious air  
To greatness native, and with few  
But fitting words of welcome true  
To promptings of his noble breast,  
Allured to banqueting and rest.

In audience-hall wide-walled, ornate,  
On rich official chair of state  
Bright-canopied and many-staired,  
Next morn sat Oxac. Thence repaired  
The strange ambassadors, low bent,  
In mien and posture reverent,  
By choicest phrase well taught to bear  
Their royal message. Otherwhere  
Seemed Oxac's thought, and yet he gave  
A courteous ear.

The architrave  
Of soul is sense—it must be so ;  
To see, to hear, is not to *know* ;  
The tongue may prattle many a day  
When soul is silent or away ;  
Sense answers to the fingerings  
Of triflers ; 't is the soul that sings.

The royal message Oxac heard  
Like one who dreams ; each tone and word,  
O'erfull of meaning vague, or good  
Or ill, not clearly understood.

“ Know thou, great Oxac, that our king—  
Good Kayi,<sup>19</sup>—he who beareth sway  
Throughout Xibalba,<sup>20</sup> found one day,  
Enshrined with many a rare forgotten thing,  
An ancient record—linking thee and thine  
To sires illustrious of his royal line.

“ And ye are kinsmen ; it is well.  
We come to ask for Kayi's son  
A wife—so doth our business run,  
Directed by Xibalba's oracle.  
The gods inspire thy words, that we may bring  
A swift and gracious answer to our king.”

Then followed silence. Never fear  
Twitched Oxac's lip, or shook his knee,  
Yet his great heart stood still to hear  
The answer. “ Time—a little time,” quoth he,  
“ To speak the destinies of lives and states.  
Noble ambassadors, my answer waits.”

In Oxac's garden was a spot  
Cool-curtained from the tiresome day ;  
Retiring thither, sometimes he forgot  
The world without—Zululu at her play  
Beside him. To this solitude, apart  
He turned with measured steps and troubled heart.

Hour after hour alone with thought

He lingered. "Why doth Kayi seek  
Alliance that with flattery could be bought ?

And what can claim of kinship else bespeak ?  
A true nobility from self must spring ;  
Linked to old royalty makes no man king.

"Xibalba, queen of tropic lands—

My fathers sailed the summer seas  
That flung their pearls into her rosy hands ;  
A haughty beauty decked with brilliancies,  
Yet strong she was, and is ;—wives are there none  
In all her glittering courts for Kayi's son ? "

"The son, who to his father's throne

Will come with rounded fame and age—  
What then ? Zululu queen ! O thought o'ergrown !  
I doubt me much, this seemly embassy,  
And yet—this doubt were better than the bane  
A foolish dream hath mixed for heart and brain.

"Perchance I wrong the king, the state,

Myself, my child, by doubts unkind ;  
Ungenerous judgments dwell not with the great ;  
Suspicion speaks a littleness of mind.  
Why should I meet with a reluctant frown,  
To my sweet child the proffer of a crown ?

"Yet, O my child ! my child ! what words

Thy father speaks in vexèd hours !  
Could I but keep thee with the springtime birds  
Nor ever miss thee from thy native bowers !

When life's dull afternoon grows shadowy,  
And chill lips from the unknown whisper me,

“How shall I stretch my trembling hands,  
And strain my weary eyes in vain !  
O frenzied brain by flattery's breezes fanned !  
Cruel, in cup of gold, the draught of pain !  
A father's love by glory's glare beguiled—  
Away ambition ! give me back my child !”

“Look, father ; will it die ? alas  
My pretty bird you shall not die !  
Good Zinco” found it fluttering in the grass  
And in his warm hands let its feathers dry—  
But still it will not sing—it will not eat !”  
So stormed the chattering maid Oxac's retreat.

“Zululu : come to me ! yes—no—  
Ah, well, the bird—what did you ask ?”  
“Good Zinco”—but the chieftain thundered, “Go !”  
And spurned the trembling slave back to his task,  
Then to Zululu, half impatiently,  
“See you ! the bird is dead—throw it away !”

From that same hour was Oxac changed.  
His daughter—not from her estranged—  
He held her with a father's pride ;  
But like the ashes of his bride  
Love casketed, were thus laid by  
The tenderness of tone and eye,

Endearing word, and warm caress ;  
It was not that he loved her less—  
His "gracious answer" had been won,  
And she was pledged to Kayi's son.

To train his heart, that it might grow  
By fixed gradations to the woe  
Of final loss, to be most just  
Toward one for whom he held in trust  
His child—no longer all his own,  
His life took on a sterner tone ;  
Thus, when his face a sadness wore,  
She could not charm him as before,  
With pretty prattle, wondering "why."  
The light was kindly in his eye,  
But seemed as coming from afar,  
Unsympathetic as a star  
Whose silvery beams with promise rife,  
Shine on, but warm not into life.

Those moods her arts could not dispel  
Cast shadows which about her fell,  
And followed to the woodsy shade,  
Where lone and silent she would braid  
Her autumn flowers—no longer bright ;  
Through tears they seemed as touched with blight.  
But when they faded, and the days  
Grew dismal in their dumb amaze,  
Zululu was not loath to cast  
Her cheerless sports into the past.  
What seasons chased away her spring !

Betrothed, and to a future king,  
Was fitness needful, and a school  
Of lengthened term and rigid rule.  
What heavy counsels for her ear !  
What stern commands, what tasks severe  
For little hands unused to aught  
Save ministries to childish thought !  
Yet must the pretty princess prove  
Worthy a royal husband's love.  
With character well poised, and full  
Of modest virtues, dutiful,  
Low-voiced and gentle, cultured, kind,  
With dignity of mien and mind.<sup>22</sup>

Her fingers must be taught to wed  
Their cunning to the silken thread,  
To weave with patient toil and care,  
In many a bold device, and rare,  
Xibalba's banner ; for her lord,  
With glittering gems, and golden cord  
His nuptial robe.

But will she spin  
Love's feathery thread ? and broider in  
With dimpled fingers, birds and flowers—  
The dew and sunshine of glad hours,  
Bright hopes and rosy dreams ? Perchance ;  
For childhood is life's sweet romance.

The seasons slowly came and went—  
Zululu, on her tasks intent,

Gave little heed, but 'neath the eyes  
Of Bacca,<sup>23</sup> set to supervise  
Her education, sped away  
From childhood artless, free, and gay,  
To graver realm—to womanhood,  
While lightly on the threshold stood  
Her guileless feet.

Yet more she wrought  
Than robe and banner. Love untaught,  
Propelled the shuttle of her thought  
Which through her soul bright-wingèd flew,  
Till fancy's light creation grew  
A grand ideal at whose shrine  
A white life knelt with gift divine,  
Her maiden love.

All virtues bore  
The name of Kaska.<sup>24</sup> Unaware  
She prayed to him, but One who wore  
A radiant countenance, bent o'er  
The hills of light and heard her prayer.  
Her thoughts sometimes took voice, and trilled  
A tuneful measure, and so filled  
The hours with music, that the day  
Though wearisome, soon stole away.

“Through and through, through and through,  
Polished needle, thread of blue :—  
Aye, sweet bird, I hear thy song,  
But my task is long, so long !  
This a royal robe must be—  
Some one waits for me.

“Through and through, through and through,  
Every color, every hue  
Copied from the sunset skies ;  
Will it glad his gracious eyes,  
That this border is so fair,  
    Fringed with jewels rare ?

“Through and through, through and through,  
Every loop and stitch so true !  
Will he love me long and well ?  
How can little maiden tell ?  
Words—I know not what they mean—  
    ‘Kaska’s bride and queen.’

“Through and through, through and through,  
Every hour some tinting new  
Floats into the web I weave.  
Shall Zululu joy or grieve,  
That she is a little bride,  
    Knowing naught beside ?

“Through and through, through and through,  
Twist the roseate with the blue ;  
Can a little maiden rest  
Lovingly upon his breast ?  
Trustfully ? it must be so—  
    Aye, it must be so.”





### CANTO III.

#### XIBALBA.

AT rest, two tropic seas between,  
On flowery couch o'erarched with sheen,  
Her language love, her breath the breeze  
Perfumed from groves of spiceries—  
Xibalba this, whose shores of green  
Beyond the billowy waste were seen  
By Votan,<sup>26</sup> who one elder day  
Came hither with benignant sway,  
And long his chosen people led—  
The mighty Mayas.

Far outspread  
Usumasinta's <sup>26</sup> fertile vale,  
Where marvels of an oldtime tale  
Were born, matured, grew old and died.  
Where rose the city of his pride  
Nachan <sup>27</sup> luxurious, built to brave  
The dust of ages o'er her grave  
Slow sifting.

From that ancient seat  
Of culture curiously complete,  
Sprang many a Maya <sup>28</sup> branch—from one

Was Kayi,<sup>29</sup> an illustrious son  
Of sires whose royal lineage ran  
In line unbroken back to Chan.<sup>30</sup>  
Thus came to Kayi sovereignty  
Of fair Xibalba. Wise was he,  
His goodly kingdom ruling well  
A score of Katun <sup>31</sup> years, when fell  
A shadow clouding heart and mind  
With apprehensions undefined.

As once he slept, strange whispers stole  
Quite through the portal of the soul  
And woke him trembling. Armed and starred,  
About him stood his trusty guard—  
Yet scarcely were his fears dispelled.  
Thenceforth was doubly sentineled  
His palace chamber. Ill at ease,  
He dreamed of bold conspiracies  
By day and night. Sometimes in guise  
Of stupid slave, with downcast eyes,  
And clumsy tread, and shoulders bent  
With drudgery and discontent,  
He threaded crowded thoroughfares ;  
Or, trafficking his paltry wares,  
Long loitering in the market-place,  
A trader garrulous, the grace  
Of barter bickerings he tried—  
And now and then he would deride  
King Kayi—sometimes praise, the while  
He marked the answering frown or smile.

O'erwearied, Kayi sought one day  
The grove's seclusion ; as he lay  
Cool pillowed on perpetual green,  
God's blessed curtains drawn between  
Himself and feverish cares, he slept—  
Yet wakefully—so constant kept  
His ear its well set watch. What feet  
Are those approaching his retreat—  
Near, nearer, and with what intent ?  
'T were well thick covert boughs low bent  
Forbade their glossy leaves to part.  
Above the beating of his heart  
The wretched king his name o'erheard  
In parable, with smothered word,  
And unfledged phrases in the dark  
Ill born, hushed voices hoarse and stark,  
Some dreadful purpose making known  
By passion's murderous monotone.

A quick discernment fear bestows ;  
King Kayi recognized his foes,  
Could call their names, their leader learned ;  
'T was he whose soul for vengeance burned,  
The old-time rebel, false Tetan,<sup>32</sup>  
Once chieftain of a powerful clan  
In distant province. Years before  
His neck he bent, but ever wore  
The yoke defiantly. He knew  
Tetan, and all, but deathly dew  
By utter anguish quick distilled,  
His brow o'erspread ; his life-blood chilled.

Forgot its speed from heart to brain.  
Alas the blow that deadens pain !  
That voice was Kaska's very own !  
His son was plotting for the throne !

King Kayi spoke his fears to none,  
But carefully observed his son,  
While day by day confirmed his fears.  
Young Kaska, grown beyond his years,  
Had princely presence, and a face  
Of manly beauty, with the grace  
Of youthful valor. In a mould  
Unblemished, dwelt his spirit bold,  
Aggressive, restless, desperate  
For that wild draught supposed to sate  
The thirst for glory.

With what bands  
We seek to bind the lawless hands  
Of mad ambition stretched above  
The healthful bounds of light and love  
To pluck the stars, a name to win !  
The fierceness of the fire within—  
Who lit it knows. The same who moves  
Contented souls in quiet grooves  
Of small desires. The strong, swift wing  
Of pride—the feeble fluttering  
Of innate gentleness, confuse  
Our faulty judgments ; but He views  
With equal eye, the eternal strife  
Of matter pulsing with a life  
Uncomprehended.

Late returned  
Was Kaska, from a tribe that spurned  
Control ; commissioned by the king  
To quell rebellion and to bring  
Victorious peace—commissioned, since  
For service bold the restless prince  
Was fitted. Many a field is lost  
We fancied won—so great its cost !

Himself a traitor, Kaska chose  
Alliance with his country's foes ;  
He sought the ear of old Tetan,  
Well pleased to find him with his clan  
All couchant for a deadly spring  
Into the palace of the king !  
But Kaska counselled brief delays,  
And fed the fires forbade to blaze  
Untimely.

In the court he knew  
Were those, a despicable few  
Whom bribes could buy, and those he bought—  
Yet inly scorned them. Then bethought  
How good Oribo<sup>33</sup> might be won,  
Oribo, Kayi's younger son,  
Whom all men loved ; not Kaska's peer  
In lordly mien, and acts severe,  
But comely, straight and tall he stood  
Like some young cedar of the wood,  
Sure promise of a giant good.  
Than Kaska, by twelve rounded moons  
The younger—but unequal noons

They neared ; one dazzled—one was fair.  
For Kaska with the very air  
Of childhood strange delirium drew ;  
Two brothers, side by side they grew ;  
Two natures, ever drawn apart.

Staunch virtues flourished in the heart  
Of young Oribó. Brave at need,  
He scorned a mean or cruel deed ;  
He would not smite a wretch in thrall,  
Nor shoot a bird to see it fall  
With dripping breast and broken wing,  
Because it was a helpless thing.  
No greed had he for power or fame ;  
With gentle actions graced his name ;  
So true to self, the gods, the state,  
Upright, symmetrical, ornate  
Of character, without offence,  
A very type of excellence.

It troubled Kaska, how to speak  
Base purposes to one whose cheek  
No crimeful breath had ever kissed ;  
Whose clear, calm eye, above the mist  
That clings to sordid lives, could scan  
Unshamed the face of heaven and man.

Beneath the palms one eventide,  
The prince approached his brother's side  
So quietly, the quivering blooms  
Half coyly yielded their perfumes.

Oribo, with a pleased surprise  
Gave greeting. Royal courtesies  
Were Kaska's due—his future king  
Who soon to his estate would bring  
A lovely bride. Yet not a thought  
Of envy with his fealty wrought.

“Nay, gentle brother, sit. From thee  
I ask not homage ; let me share  
Thy quiet hour, and this sweet air  
That comes with cooling from the sea.

“For wearied am I, and my brain  
Much heated by the glare of day,  
While heavy thoughts my spirits weigh.”

“Would I might ease a brother's pain.”

“Thou canst, Oribo. In the chase  
To-day—whate'er its meaning be—  
A wounded rabbit fled to me.”  
My bosom gave it hiding-place.

“Would'st thou have sheltered it? Say not,  
I know thou wouldst—yet hear me more :  
A hunted buck which fled before  
His fierce pursuers, reached a spot  
He could not scale.

O then to see  
His desperate valor ! what a fight  
He made for life ! say, was it right  
To plead his cause, and set him free ?

“ Nay, answer not—full well I know  
The language of thy noble breast ;  
Thyself wouldst plead for the oppressed,  
Nor yield him to a deadly foe.

“ Aye, good Oribo, thou would'st save,  
Spare, and set free the hunted beast,  
Pour out thy pity for the least—  
But if a wounded warrior brave,  
Enslaved with all his gallant clan,  
And crushed to earth, and if thy hand—— ”

“ Say on, I do not understand.”

“ Dost know the chieftain, brave Tetan ?  
He pleads for liberty in vain ;  
The king is cruel, will not heed ;  
The gods forsake us in our need  
If we break not the old man's chain ! ”

“ Hold, Kaska ! What ? Thy rash words scare  
My senses hence. The king is wise—  
Gods ! there is madness in thine eyes !  
Thy thought is treason ! O beware ! ”

No further parley Kaska made ;  
He clapped his hands, and from the shade  
Of tree, and shrub, and fountain spray,  
And wandering vines in evening's gray  
Clad spectral, murderous minions sprang  
Upon Oribo. Soon the clang  
Of conflict through the city rang—



And Kaska's voice inspired it all.  
"On, on!"—the palace ramparts fall.  
They leap the moat, they scale the wall,  
Those wild red demons of revolt.  
They burst the door with beamy bolt,  
And surging in like waves of doom,  
With Kayi's blood they flood his room,  
Their weapons, as with frenzy rife,  
In savage greed hew out his life ;  
And none essayed to stay a blade,  
So basely was the king betrayed,  
And so atrociously was slain !  
'T is said old ruins still retain "  
A crimson record of the crime ;  
Deeds set in blood blush on through time.

## A DIRGE.

O what a piteous thing  
Is a dead king !  
Come gaze upon him, ye who yesterday  
Prostrate approached, come near and lay  
Your hands upon his head,  
And look into his eyes—  
Left open when in wild surprise,  
Frighted, his great soul fled !  
For this your king, Kayi the wise,  
Is dead.

Sweet winds, ye need not now  
So fan his brow—

Too chill already is it for a crown  
Of earthly honor and renown—  
    Too marred by treachery.  
    His good right hand is cold,  
So cold it can no longer hold  
A little sovereignty ;  
King Kayi this, the wise, the bold—  
    'T is he.

How pallid is his cheek !  
He does not speak—  
Too palsied is his tongue, to speak his will ;  
His pulses rest, his heart is still,  
    His dull eye nothing sees—  
    It will not wake nor weep ;  
These ghastly wounds, so red and deep,  
Are painless all—and these  
Are they that brought him sleep  
    And ease.

Alas, how small a space  
Gives greatness place !  
Muffle your voices, birds and purling streams,  
Withdraw, O moon, your mellow beams ;  
    Let clouds the heaven o'erspread,  
    And flowers refuse to bloom  
For very woe, upon his tomb,  
For whom we love is dead.  
Ye gods, make swift the traitor's doom  
    And dread.



## CANTO IV.

### KASKA.

**I**N purpose, power. He does who wills.  
So men are gods ; so fate fulfils  
The soul's own prophecy ; so rise  
Earth ladders to meridian skies.  
And builders, with but human hands,  
Are toiling up from table-lands .  
Of common good, to dizzy heights  
Where meteors flash uncertain lights  
On mortal names. Or high, or low,  
Make sure, O builder, as you go  
That every round is strong and true !  
Build well—none else can build for you.

The logic of the eye defies  
Deduction ethical and wise,  
That good is beauty, beauty good.  
Men ever best have understood  
Bright object-lessons—bowed the head  
To beauty—quite apart, unwed  
To worth.

Young Kaska were a king  
Though from ambition's poisoned spring

Quaffed every power of soul and brain !  
As foremost on the battle plain  
With plumèd crest and stout cuirass <sup>36</sup>  
What legions fell to let him pass !  
His black eye flashing, and his foot  
As fleet as arrow bade to shoot  
A bird on wing ; his colors set  
In web of crimson, gold, and jet,  
He swept the land from coast to coast,  
Xibalba's terror, pride, and boast.

Anon the bold revolt was o'er,  
And Kayi's son in triumph wore  
The crown by treachery achieved.  
If any for the old king grieved,  
Though dumb his woe, yet Kaska's glance  
Was keener than his battle lance  
To pierce the heart ! he naught would brook  
Of olden loyalty, by look,  
Or reverent tone that touched the name,  
Or loving sigh, or flush of shame  
For treason's triumph—naught.

And yet  
Whom love hath crowned is sovereign. Let  
The kingdom quake, *his* throne is sure—  
For virtue builds of granite pure  
That cannot crumble ! Love ! O what  
Enshrines like love and wearies not  
With ceaseless vigils ?

Kaska sought  
The seizure of all loyal thought,

Himself was king in Kayi's stead.  
For good Oribo, if one said  
"Alas !" and dropped his eyes, 't were best  
Unmarked by Kaska in whose breast  
Dwelt jealous hate that smote the lips  
Of pity, when the red eclipse  
Which swept Xibalba's sun from sight  
Gave Kaska day, Oribo night.

A night of servitude than death  
More dread ; for what avails the breath  
That feeds not life, but quickens pain  
And lengthens woe ? The scorn, the chain,  
The drudgery that day by day  
Unnerves the man and wears away  
His spirit, till it beats no more  
With bruised wing its dungeon door—  
Such was the cruel fate decreed  
For good Oribo. None might plead  
For him, when maddened Kaska cried  
" Away !" and spurned him from his side,  
The slave of old Tetan, whose blade  
Red dripping, told the price he paid !

How tranquil is the tropic sky  
When once the tempest has gone by !  
What gentle breezes lull the deep  
When sobbing waves are rocked to sleep !  
So when her civil storm was spent,  
Peace arched Xibalba's firmament  
And hope was in the new-wrought span.

The patriot lives in many a man  
Before his mighty soul is tried  
By bribes and fears. From every side  
They thronged the new-made king about,  
And "Long live Kaska !" rose the shout  
That spoke him great ! The hero takes  
Complexion from his deeds. Who makes  
A record for historic pen  
In black, or white, must dip his pen.

The conflict o'er, luxurious ease  
The new king sought ; whate'er could please  
His senses, what his pride could feed,  
He summoned with a tyrant's greed ;  
Refitted with peculiar care  
His palace home ; with carvings rare,<sup>37</sup>  
Renewed each pier and court façade ;  
With rich mosaics all inlaid  
The spacious ceilings, walls, and floors ;  
The lintels of its twoscore doors,  
And double cornices embossed—  
And all with master skill reglossed ;  
Festooned his many royal rooms  
With arras from the choicest looms ;  
With sweeter fragrance, brighter flowers,  
Voluptuous made his garden bowers ;  
Cool fountains for his pleasure played—  
To charm him, many an iris made  
From showering spray when skies were blue  
And sunshine softly filtered through.

Within, without, around, complete,  
The city's pride, the acknowledged seat  
Of power supreme, the palace stood  
On old foundation strong and good,  
Built up by Maya skill and might,  
A marvel on her terraced height  
Of solid grandeur, with a throne  
The young imperial called his own.

To wait the coming of his bride  
Sore vexed the king, yet must he bide  
The fixed formalities of state,  
Unchallenged as the voice of fate.  
Betrothal bound, not his the power  
To change, or speed the happy hour  
By Oxac named. His restless eye  
Would chase that laggard from the sky,  
The cold-faced moon, whose silvery feet  
Paced off slow months ! O most unmeet  
His hand to cull the loveliest flower  
E'er coveted for royal bower !

To somewhat bate his discontent,  
A courtly embassy he sent  
To Oxac, bearing lavish praise  
And costly gifts, in fitting phrase  
His sturdy favor to bespeak  
With Kaska's greeting, and to seek  
How fared Zululu—and to free  
Xibalba's bird of prophecy  
Within her chamber.

With a cry  
Of sudden terror should it fly  
Away, the omen were of ill ;  
If haply, with melodious trill  
Should sing as in its native wood,  
'T were well—an augury of good.  
Where lies in man the boundary line  
Between the human and divine,  
Both having place and unison  
In form earth-wrought, and breathed upon  
By God ? Yet dust is only dust !  
A clayey casket which the rust  
Of time eats through—the body is ;  
And life is life—eternity's  
Co-equal. Thought that spurns control,—  
Each aspiration of the soul  
Is God-ward, though its flight be low :  
And Kaska, seeking long ago  
To read the book which God had sealed,  
To comprehend the unrevealed,  
To grasp what hung beyond his reach,  
To learn what angels might not teach  
Of love's to-morrow, stretched his hands  
Through oracles of olden lands  
Toward one Omnipotent ! Thus hies  
All soul-life toward its native skies !  
Whatever form its faith may wear,  
Through rudest rites or worship fair  
The spirit feeling after God  
Shall find Him.





## CANTO V.

### PORTENTS.

THE land of Oxac was at rest ;  
The bow of peace from crest to crest  
Of guardian mountains stretched across.  
The summer, that with green, and gloss,  
And shower and sunshine banished doubt,  
Now bade the ripening maize fling out  
His silky tresses, bade the vine  
Fill all his cluster cups with wine  
So pure and sweet an angel's lip  
Might press their purple rims and sip.

The chieftain saw with honest pride  
How thrived his realm. On every side  
Brown hands were building strong and straight  
In peace, the bulwarks of the state.  
Old science, freed from civic jars,  
Explored the skies, and read the stars—  
Art hastening with his axe and block  
To fix the record into rock.  
Reaped industries an hundred-fold ;  
They opened hill-side doors for gold,

And wrought in woods and metals pure  
A curious nomenclature.

The husbandman from varied fields  
Full harvests gathered ; luscious yields  
Of orchard fruitage plucked, and brown  
Abundance from the groves shook down.  
Broad commerce held imperial place ;  
Old scars were on his lifted face  
But healthful currents from his heart  
Made vital every village mart.<sup>38</sup>

The warrior brave, to join the chase  
Had noble leisure ; in the face  
Of beauty gazing, might forget  
His hideous war-cry and reset  
His tongue to tenderness, and prove  
How valorous natures yield to love.  
Yet were his battle-axe and bow  
At hand, and fit ; no stealthy foe  
Should find unmanned his dusky arm,  
His ear untuned to wars alarm.

So like an eagle bathed in light,  
Clear visioned gazing from far height,  
His strong wing folded ; though at rest,  
Brave guardian of his high-hung nest  
Dwelt Oxac, and his borders kept  
With vigilance which never slept.

Like maddened wolves athirst for blood,  
Impelled by famine, frost, and flood  
From northern regions to a zone  
Of warmth and beauty erst unknown,  
A-near in threatening tides, down poured  
The hungry, devastating horde.  
As old-time sea-kings roamed the main,  
So they the forest, vale, and plain,  
With sweep as terrible, for they  
Were near of kin ere seas made way  
Between the continents for doubt  
And washed their former footprints out.

They ranged the land from sea to sea,  
The north wind not more wild and free ;  
In woods primeval sometimes lost,  
Their pathless wanderings led or crossed  
By angry streams, whose liquid dark,  
Swift dimpled by the birchen bark,  
Delayed them not ; a stealthy foe  
Whose savage whoop and camp-fire's glow  
Knew all the wooded wilderness,  
Yet knowing, many a dark recess  
Of thickest green she wove for them  
From clambering vine, and stalwart stem,  
And low-set shrub—from whence the flash  
Of glittering eyes, the yell, the crash  
Of cruel weapon, oft bespoke  
Some hapless hunter's fate, and woke  
With orgies dread the slumberous night.<sup>39</sup>  
Ferocious in their untamed might,

Long tutored to a strange unrest,  
They went and came, annoyed and pressed  
The frontiers of Oxac's domains.

Once and again the lowland plains  
Had drunk of savage blood, and fed  
The fierce-fanged ocelot with their dead.  
In sanguine struggle oft renewed  
Though beaten back—still unsubdued.  
The warrior chief of Iztapec  
But held his ugly foe in check !

The air was full of nameless fears ;  
Drew on the "binding of the years,"  
The cycle's close. What dreams of blood,  
Disaster, pestilence and flood,  
Eclipse and earthquake, near and dread,  
Great Oxac's soul disquieted !

One evening on his couch he lay,  
Not restfully—the cares of day  
Projected shadows on his hour  
Of quietude ; some troublous power  
Had stirred his spirit's customed calm.  
In vain the eve with hush and balm  
Low breathed her benediction fair  
O'er troubled brow and silvery hair.

Fatigued, disheartened, and perplexed  
By problems intricate, and vexed  
By border bands who dared—but fled  
His vengeance long provoked, he led

His ready braves in troubled thought,  
And fought, yet all unconquering, fought.

Then too—and though he closed his eyes  
And sought to deem them phantasies,  
Yet had he marked a bodeful thing—  
The battle birds were gathering <sup>40</sup> ;  
All day, in mid-air poised—at eve  
Their sable wings did southward cleave  
The gloaming ! plenteous, warm, and red,  
Their dreadful banquet shall be spread !  
Unwonted tremors mocked his might,  
And Oxac sickened at the sight.

But more : Xibalba's messengers  
Had come and gone : through silver firs,  
Down pleasant slopes by windings fair,  
Came back on evening's quiet air  
The echoes of outgoing feet.  
But Oxac's fancies were more fleet,  
More prompt at Kaska's court than they  
With doubtful tidings, for no lay  
Of nuptial bliss their strange bird sang,  
But shrieked until the chamber rang  
With terror, and Zululu fled  
To Oxac's arms—her shining head  
Half hidden on his breast, while tears  
Bedewed the hopes of coming years !

Wore on the night, yet came not sleep  
To Oxac. Through the starry deep

Looked down the gods with eyes malign,  
Perchance for some neglected shrine !  
O'er Luna in her fleecy dress  
Forth on her round of nothingness  
In space, the wild winds flung a cloud  
Surcharged with tempest, near and loud.  
Stood up against the piney hills  
The solemn temple ; awful wills  
Wrought in the elements, the breeze  
Quick maddened, shook the towers and trees  
Until they trembled for their hold  
On granite base and hill-side mould.  
Down swirled the storm king in his ire,  
With tones of wrath, and breath of fire,  
And hand swift sowing rain and hail,  
While black wings brooded all the vale.

But Oxac heeded not ; by thought  
Tempestuous was his mind distraught.  
A half-forgotten dream awoke—  
The oracle which ill bespoke  
Zululu's fortune and his own  
Again he heard ! again was thrown  
Athwart his soul the dark distrust,  
Defiance of the gods unjust !  
He cursed the oracle of old,  
Xibalba's bird, with wings of gold  
And throat of venom.

With the dawn  
He slumbered. All the storm was gone  
When late he wakened. Some intent

Had shaped into a deed. Forth sent  
The chieftain for Zululu. What  
His undeveloped purpose, not  
A sign betrayed ; his look was cold  
And resolute, his step was bold,  
As to and fro he paced his hall,  
Now listening for the gentle fall  
Of gentle feet somewhat delayed,  
Perchance to bind a glossy braid  
About her brow, or to express  
By nice adjustment of her dress  
Her nature's sweeter harmonies ;  
Perchance—but possibilities  
Take wing, as on his ears—

“ O chief,

The gods this mystery make brief ;  
Zululu's room is empty, still—  
Her presence answers not thy will ! ”  
So spake the messenger aghast  
With terror.

Fingers chill clutched fast  
The heart of Oxac, and he stood  
Like one bewildered in a wood,  
Scarce knowing that himself were he ;  
Yet soon awoke the energy  
Of conscious strength, which scorned to yield  
One foot of any battle-field.  
The guards their wonted posts had held,  
The city well was sentinelled,  
Nor gate, nor street, nor corridor  
Unkept amid the crash and war

That filled the air with deafening sound,  
And shook the palace, drenched the ground,  
Poured torrents down the mountain path  
And smote the temple in their wrath.  
And yet were demons of the night  
In league with the mysterious flight  
Of fair Zululu and her maid !

The fragrant breath of morning swayed  
The drapery of her chamber charmed  
By soft confusion, and alarmed  
By feet unwonted ; on the floor  
The pretty veil Zululu wore  
When summoned by the chief to meet  
The embassy ; a garland sweet,  
But slowly fading, grieved away  
Its little life, and near it lay  
A coronal of pearls, the gift  
Of Kaska ; on her couch a drift  
Of gorgeous stuffs, in gold and green,  
And crimson, and in azure sheen  
Her light apparel for the days  
Delicious, when the sunshine plays  
With dewy sweetness.

O to come  
Within a room where nought is dumb,  
And everything says " Gone ! " Aye, more,  
Says " Gone—we know not whence ! " The lore  
Of anguish this, the choke-damp air  
Of desolation and despair !



There are who live, not knowing why,  
Or how, save that they cannot die !  
There are, who suffer grief and loss—  
Great souls, whom tempests beat and toss  
But cannot sink ; who ply the oar,  
Their compass keep, and make the shore !  
And such seemed Oxac.

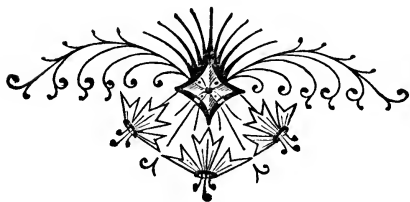
Who endures  
With courage what he must, half cures  
His pain, grows strong, and speeds his night  
By counting stars that give him light.

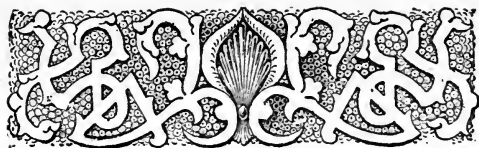
Within the palace and without  
Each nook was searched, in and about  
Guards stationed. Through the city sped  
The tidings swift, because so dread.  
All day the fruitless search was pressed,  
The sacred shrines anew were dressed,  
And Oxac, humbled to the dust,  
Implored the gods he deemed unjust.

What flashed the fancy on his brain  
That checked his prayer ? His bosom's pain,  
In momentary frenzy died !  
He called a chosen few, and cried :  
“ Pursue Xibalba's embassy !  
Bring back my stolen child to me ! ”

No sooner heard their chief's command,  
Than sprang to arms the honored band—

Enthusiasts, by the gods endowed  
With fateful zeal, the prompt and proud  
Avengers of great Oxac's wrong !  
Amid the cheering of the throng  
At set of sun they marched away,  
Soon lost to sight in evening's gray.





## CANTO VI.

### THE FLIGHT.

“GOOD Bacca, courage ; like a reed  
Thou quakest ! wherefore ? for our need  
The blue-eyed lightnings—how they play  
Along our path ! A curious way—  
I stumbled on it when a child,  
Its very mystery beguiled  
Me hither. Softly ! we are near  
The low, dark entrance—do not fear  
But follow.”

’T was a granite hall,  
Low-roofed and tortuous, floor and wall  
The gods well laid, what time was hewn  
The sacred chamber dim with rune  
To which it led.

“Hold fast my hand  
Good Bacca,” with the sweet command  
Zululu drew her on. Low bent,  
On, through, and up the wild ascent  
They groped their way into a night  
Unmooned and starless ! Left and right  
The passage broadened more and more,

The ceiling lifted from the floor,  
Until they stood within a room  
Capacious, hung with heavy gloom  
And full of silence. Whispered low,  
Zululu :

“ Bacca, well I know  
The god is here—I feel his breath  
Upon my cheek ! ’t is chill as death  
Had touched his lips :—yet fear I not ;  
To this secure but awesome spot  
He well hath brought us—well will keep—  
And he will give us rest and sleep.”

Small service Bacca’s to compose  
Their scarlet cushions for repose,  
To shake the royal mantle out  
And wrap the pretty form about  
And whisper “ Peace ”—the good-night word  
Zululu’s ear had ever heard  
Ere sleeping ; but as ne’er before  
She caught the meaning which it bore—  
A trustful calm—a full release  
From wakeful woe—“ Peace, Bacca, peace,  
And restful slumbers.”

Wearied they—  
So long and rough had been their way,  
With needful stores so laden ; rest  
Came soon and sweet, beyond the quest  
Of swift pursuit ; for none would brave  
A near approach to Quizquo’s “ cave !

Far up the mountain's wooded side  
There yawned a chasm deep and wide—  
Weird antechamber of his hall ;  
One only doorway, dim and small,  
The dreadful god had left ajar,<sup>42</sup>  
Nor had it need of guard or bar  
To halt unhallowed feet—he sent  
So prompt and fierce a punishment.

About this cave with terrors fraught,  
Old half forgotten legends wrought  
With dim complexities of sense  
Enduring ramparts of defence ;  
What hunters over-venturesome  
Who never from the chase had come !  
What chastisement for folly, borne !  
What fleeing shrivelled souls forsworn  
Celestial good ! rash souls who tried  
To push th' eternal doors aside,  
To seek with avaricious eyes  
The stores within his treasuries !  
Clouds, smoke, and earthquake scared the land  
When Quizquo lit his awful brand  
From Popocatepetl's fires,  
And smote unnumbered bloody pyres.

Yet never had Zululu feared  
The mountain god her faith revered,  
The being whom her guileless sense  
Had clothed with fair omnipotence.  
A god all virtuous and wise

She saw him—never in disguise  
So ugly as to fright away,  
In visions or by night or day  
Her sweetest thoughts of love and might.  
She oft had listened with delight  
The low-voiced winds and rippling streams,  
His lullabies to charm her dreams,  
And guide her through the mazy round  
Of pilgrimage to holy ground.

She had a quiet, reverent trust  
In Quizquo—she believed him just,  
And therefore good ; instinctive took  
Her gracious creed from Nature's book.  
She knew that tiniest blossoms grew  
Anear the chasm, all gemmed with dew,  
And by divine afflation fed,  
So strangely fair and perfected !  
And she had seen the song-bird swing  
The feathery brake, and dip his wing  
In brimming basins cool and brown  
Where danced perpetual waters down  
From hidden fountain ; she had heard  
Soft harmonies as zephyrs stirred  
Boughs amaranthine, to imbreathe  
The shadowy silences beneath.

“ He loves the birds, and flowers, and trees,  
With all their fine affinities  
For human souls—it must be true  
He loves their friend Zululu too.”

So when the bird with evil strain  
Had burned into her throbbing brain  
And smitten soul its withering  
Of spring-time hopes, while that dull thing  
The world calls "life" stretched on and on,  
She knew not whither—lost in woe  
To-morrows, shivering had she flown  
The scene, and in her room alone  
With Bacca, sought to burst the bands  
Of anguish ; wrung her helpless hands  
In reckless woe, and murmuring wept  
Till slowly to his setting crept  
The hazy sun.

Then like a flower  
Grown strong 'neath heaven's baptismal shower  
She dried her tears, stood up and said :  
" 'T is well—Zululu will not wed  
Xibalba's king. Nay, do not chide—  
No longer is this Kaska's bride,  
But Oxac's daughter ! Mark her well  
Good Bacca ; in her breast doth dwell  
His stalwart soul ; her pulses thrill  
Obedient to a master will—  
Her grand inheritance. The past  
How bright ! The future overcast  
With clouds, the present full of pain,  
Regrets, and longings, drenched with vain  
And senseless tears which were beguiled  
By sudden woe ! a chieftain's child,  
I scorn them, and these southern gems !  
What were a thousand diadems

Paled with disaster, to a brow  
Disquieted ?

The gods endow  
True lives with suffering to invite  
The soul to tempt a skyward flight  
With strong, swift wing, though in the dark.  
See ! shadows beckon, lightnings mark  
Our pathway ; let us flee and hide,  
Till Kaska shall forget his bride !  
Up, up the mountain's rugged side  
Is Quizquo's cave—nay—start not thus !  
A god so great will care for us,  
Since pitiful he is and good  
To all the weaklings of the wood."

'T was thus Zululu won her maid  
To service perilous, and stayed  
Her fluttering heart, and sped the task  
Of preparation. 'Neath the mask  
Of friendly darkness, in disguise  
They passed adown the galleries,  
Like shapeless shadows, out, and through  
The massive walls !

Zululu knew  
Where lay—his gray head in the dust—  
A stone that late had fled his trust  
And left an opening near the ground ;  
With careful stilly search she found  
The portal which no sentry kept,  
And through it unperceived they crept.





## CANTO VII.

### THE CONFLICT.

DAYS passed—how long and desolate  
To Oxac, o'er his daughter's fate  
Perturbed and tortured 'neath the dense,  
Chill, heavy clouds of dumb suspense !

Days passed—how long and dull they seemed  
To Kaska ! days all unredeemed  
By worthy purpose ; incomplete  
Because by noble deeds and sweet  
Unrounded. 'T is no idle thing—  
The moment that with golden wing  
Flies backward to eternity  
Full freighted, thoughtless soul, by thee !

Day after day with love's surmise  
Went Kaska forth, his eager eyes  
Far sweeping the horizon's rim  
From early dawn, till twilight dim,  
To catch some sign for eye or ear  
Bespeaking the approach and near  
Of long-expected embassy—  
E'er yet they came.

What though their way  
Lagoons debarred and streams unspanned,  
Dark wooded hills and seas of sand ?  
Though rough and perilous and long  
The route from thymy groves of song  
To loveliest vale of Anahuac ?  
To Kaska, trifling as the rack  
Of summer skies a breath might chase,  
Obstructions seemed—they found no place  
With him.

At length their coming tread  
He heard and more. Old courtiers bred,  
With tongue persuasive trained to reach  
By dainty idioms of speech  
Unwelcome truths, led through the maze  
Of foreign favor, gifts, and praise,  
Till Kaska warned the dallying tongue !  
With eagerness he caught, but flung  
Aside the tidings ere half told,  
Discerned the doubt 'neath tissue fold !—  
“ The beautiful Zululu led  
From sweet seclusion, with her head  
Low bent, and cheeks aflame, to see  
And hear the bird of prophecy !  
Its brilliant plumage charmed her eye,  
But when, with strange terrific cry  
It fled her gentle hand in fright,  
She wept and stole away ! ”

A light  
Unheralded his dark eye flashed,  
And blood impatient hotly dashed

His cheek, the while he smiled in scorn—  
An ominous smile of passion born,  
And charged with wrath !

“ Ha ! go,” he said,  
His proud lips tremulous, “ go shred  
Your pretty story in the ears  
Of slaves !—my promised bride in tears !  
My palace brooded by the bird  
Of destiny ! yet know—a word  
Of this,—a sign, a look, a breath—  
Is certain ignominious death ! ”

His lords withdrawn, the king conferred  
With power and pride ; to kill the bird,  
Defy the omen, and possess  
His bride they counselled him, nor less  
His will approved. Should he, a king  
Whose sceptre was no trifling thing,  
Yield his prerogative to fate  
Like men uncrowned, dispassionate,  
Who, menaced by a fear, forswear  
The god within ? To will—to dare—  
The two fierce forces known to lead  
Success—he yoked them for his need !

“ No bird in all the land,” he cried,  
“ Shall fright from Kaska’s arms his bride ! ”

Ere long a sullen hum awoke ;  
A shapeless sound which grew and broke  
In tones discordant—tones that seemed

But meaningless to him who dreamed  
Of coming bliss, till swelled the sound  
To sudden tumult ; from the ground  
It rose imperious, and wrought  
Its interdict of happy thought.

A warrior band was at his gate,  
Strong-armèd strangers, desperate  
And rude of speech.

“ In Oxac’s name—  
By his command, we come to claim  
His child—Zululu ! These demands  
To Kaska ! from his crafty hands  
Be swift release or shall he know  
The vengeance of a northland foe.  
Go—speed the message to the throne ! ’

“ By all the gods let blood atone  
The base indignity ! Breaks thus  
This Oxac most perfidious,  
Our sacred bond ? False-hearted chief !  
He seeks a quarrel—be it brief  
And hot ! ”

So cried the king in wrath—  
Enraged as if across his path  
A serpent venomous did crawl,  
He stamped the fair floor of his hall,  
And glared with frenzied eyes adown  
Upon the tumult of the town.  
For forth to red encounter sprang  
A host of ready braves ! Out rang

The cry "Avenge the king's disgrace !"  
With battle-axe and pointed mace,<sup>43</sup>  
And ponderous hammer, dart, and spear,  
Enraged by hate that blinded fear,  
In close encounter foe met foe  
Where deadly thrust, and crushing blow  
Threw wide the door of swift escape  
For many a warrior soul, from shape  
Rough hewn to earth.

Yet all in vain  
Strove Oxac's noble few ; their slain  
High heaped the gateway where they fought,"  
Till stood but two, who well bethought,  
"What boots it thus to throw away  
Our lives in this unequal fray ?"  
Forth through the murderous lines they broke,  
The while in awful fury woke  
The wild pursuit—o'ercome at length  
By northern courage, speed, and strength !—  
On, on to Anahuac !

Not long  
Might Oxac suffer seeming wrong  
To pass unpunished. Far and near  
Vindictive tongue, and eager ear  
Conveyed, and drank the maddening tale ;  
And soon re-echoed all the vale  
With loud "To arms !" and soon a host  
Of dusky braves with threat and boast,  
And flags outflung defiantly,  
Swept down the valley toward the sea.



## CANTO VIII.

### IN QUIZQUO'S CAVE.

“SIT close, my child, small breath for speech  
Hath Bacca—nay, methinks to teach  
Our tones the hush of voiceless fears  
Were wise—so many tongues and ears  
Hath Nature ! Would we were not come  
Upon this peril ! nought is dumb,  
Or blind, in all this haunt of hers ;  
The very leaves are whisperers !  
One like a meaning, sensuous thing,  
Came floating down on high red wing  
Across my path ! I hurried past,  
But urged along by fitful blast  
It rustling chased me as I fled—  
The while a night-owl overhead  
Loud called to me !

“The dead twigs beat  
Their sharp retort to hasty feet  
Which crushed them ! To the tell-tale breeze  
Low bowed and listened all the trees ;  
The very stars did on me stare !  
The thorn-bush from his tangled lair

My mantle clutched—see how 't is rent !  
And when I reached the steep descent  
By trailing vine, and scraggy root  
Made difficult, my careless foot  
Struck hard a century-sleeping stone  
Which woke, and leaped away, with tone  
Of sullen echoes, which did say :  
' A maiden came this way, this way !  
Ye who seek her, follow, follow,  
Follow,' till in accents hollow  
Died the voice.

What if were heard  
By other ears the fateful word ?  
O child ! new tongues articulate  
With soul, all things inanimate  
Have taken on : we are betrayed !  
What madness urged us to invade  
This dreadful place ? The gods will hide  
No longer Kaska's promised bride."

" Good Bacca, thou art wearied—lean  
Upon me thus ; so would I screen  
Thy trembling form from every ill ;  
Thy temples burn, thy hand is chill.  
Thy soul with terror seems distraught.  
For two long moons, how hast thou wrought  
My weal, and with what cost to thee !  
Thy patience, care, and constancy  
Amaze me ! all thy wanderings wild  
To bring me food."

" Nay, nay, my child,

Speak of it not."

"That thou shouldst share  
This solitude, these perils dare,  
Doth grieve me, Bacca."

"Grieve thee? know  
For thee my child, I would forego  
All ease, all ill endure—yet what  
Avail if Quizquo succor not?"

"Seems it so difficult to rest  
A little in the shadowed nest  
Of love unseen? so hard to stand  
In silence, holding fast the hand  
Omnipotent? shall doubt or fear  
Disquiet whom the gods hold dear?  
Expression of divinest thought  
Is Nature.

Wherefore question aught  
Of solemn wood, or quiet nook,  
Or vainful owl, or babbling brook,  
Or answering echoes? On thy path  
Looked down the stars? O not in wrath.  
Bright fluttering leaf, and nodding tree,  
And zephyr soft, on ministry  
Of mercy, all methinks were sent  
To whisper 'peace.'"

"O what hath lent  
Thy soul its fatal trust? Yet fly!  
Perchance to tarry is to die"—

"Perchance to *live*, but what is life?  
A little breath in constant strife



With fatal forces ? O methinks  
The soul is bound by golden links  
To life that feeds not in this air—  
A more of life and elsewhere !  
How thought in this retreat hath grown,  
In converse with the gods ! unknown,  
Yet near, so near that I have caught  
Immortal breathings which have taught  
Old words new meanings.

What is death ?

Oft have I watched with bated breath  
When stilly night was at its noon,  
The burial of the beauteous moon—  
Yet hath she ever risen—no beam  
Of beauty lost !

Beside the stream  
That wanders through our pleasant vale  
I know a bank where violets pale  
In spring-time waken from a sleep  
Refreshful, though so long and deep !  
And I have called it death—that strange  
Withdrawal, where they rest, and change  
Their faded hues for fairer.

So

Methinks to die—is but to go  
Apart a little, and lay by  
My dusty dress—for shall not I  
Be still Zululu ? still the same  
In thought and look, my very name  
Mine ever ? In my conscious breast  
Something asserts it. Not dull rest,

But truer, freer life, that goes  
Straight through the shadow of repose  
Into the morn—"

Unheralded

The awful shock ! It burst o'erhead  
With fiery bolt, and thunderous stroke  
Which thrilled the cavern, and bespoke  
The mountain god ! Around, and o'er,  
Were jar, and deafening crash, and roar,  
With quivering walls on either side,  
And granite ceiling parting wide !

Upheaved the rocky floor and fell  
Uncertain o'er the deadly swell  
Of molten billows mad with fire,  
And quenchless as great Quizquo's ire.  
The dim small doorway to their hall  
Closed slowly into solid wall,  
And all was over !

O to beat

The door close shut to hope's retreat !  
To know the great bright world apart  
Whirls on, nor heeds the throbbing heart  
Entombed ! yet patience, gentle souls !  
Yes, fold your puny hands, and pray !  
God's blessed angel sometimes rolls  
The stone of sepulture away.



## CANTO IX.

### AFTER THE BATTLE.

A WOKE the vale of lakes and rills,  
Of Iztapac the templed town,  
As o'er the shoulders of the hills  
Soft veiled, the morning sun looked down,

On many a home where children played,  
And patient mothers toiled the while ;  
Where o'er her task, the black-eyed maid  
Recalled her brave with sigh and smile,

Nor thought o'erlong the fibrous seams,  
As swift her cactus needle flew—  
For love was fashioning from dreams  
A robe of gossamer and blue.

And white-haired men whose wars were o'er,  
Smoked on in silence and apart :<sup>45</sup>  
Or sitting by the cabin door  
They shaped and barbed the arrowy dart.

From polished wood, shell, tooth, and bone,  
Rare implements and trinkets made,<sup>46</sup>

Or chiselled from the gray-green stone  
The huge head crusher, axe, and blade.

And aged matrons chanted low  
To dusky babes upon their knees  
The god-like feats of Manabaho,<sup>47</sup>  
The wild exploits of Papukewis,<sup>48</sup>

And strong-armed Kwasind,<sup>49</sup> hearing which  
Youths grew ambitious, rushed to wars ;  
By deeds of daring sought a niche  
Beside the god who counted scars,

And gave long fame. Thrice blessèd he  
With life grown strong, and straight, and white  
Into its immortality  
Among the stars and crowned with light.

Against a slope of faded green  
Stood up the temple facing bold  
The sun, whose burning eye had seen  
Her altars lit in cycles old.

Trod to and fro the dark-browed priest  
In solemn service ; weird and tall  
His shadow, which the glowing east  
Flung back on the vermilion wall,<sup>50</sup>

Where sacred signs by time unspoiled,  
Were lithographed by hands at rest ;  
And where in awful beauty coiled  
The serpent with the feathered crest.

And countless, curious forms outgrown  
By mighty souls, long time embalmed ;  
Heroic shapes that lived in stone ;  
Brave barks eternally becalmed

Hark ! what of rumor brings the breeze  
Fresh from the southland ? Old men rise,  
Rebuke their late enforced ease,  
Their deaf ears bend, and cast their eyes

Adown the vale ; and women leave  
Their uncrushed maize, and shade their brows,  
And look, and listen, to retrieve  
Their fancies from the shimmering boughs.

See ! nearer, clearer, lo, they come  
With chants of victory—Oxac's braves !  
Loud welcomes greet the warriors home  
And taunt their many hapless slaves,

Xibalban captives ! War's red hand  
Smote heavily, snatched Kaska's crown,  
Flung far his sceptre of command,  
And slew the tyrant—tearing down

The standard of his pride and power !  
Though terrible, yet brief the strife ;  
Alas for him whose final hour  
So reaps the follies of his life !

Now, O Xibalba—charmèd land,  
Dig deep and hide thy lustrous head !

'Neath thickening mould, and drifting sand,  
And dark old forests make thy bed  
In silence : Yet be not so dead,  
But sleep ! sleep—clinging to thy past.  
And though the slow-paced ages make  
Long marches o'er thee, holding fast  
Thy buried fame, thou need'st not wake !  
E'en though the eager Present cry  
“Awake !” sleep on ! Old Time hath sealed  
Thy quietude. They do not die  
Whom God entombs ! the mystery  
Of silent life, lies unrevealed.

Feasts, sacred festivals, and games<sup>51</sup>  
Attest the general joy ; red flames  
The altar fire : the hearth-stone glows  
O'er warriors stretched in soft repose  
Well earned : all hearts are jubilant  
Save one, whom neither victor's chant,  
Nor spoils can charm—the noble chief !  
His heart is heavy with a grief  
That crowds out joy. The victors brought  
Proud trophies back—not whom they sought—  
Zululu !

O how small becomes  
A triumph, the encomiums  
That live on mortal breath, the power  
That grapples for one little hour  
With fate when all the lights are out,  
And gropes the hungry heart about  
Unsatisfied !

What cares he now  
That men before his greatness bow—  
That he is Oxac? Hides away  
The wretched chieftain, and the day  
Wears on with noisesome glee and din;  
All tiresome sounds rush rudely in  
And torture him with cruel pain  
Till madness seizes on his brain!  
He calls his child, and beats the air,  
And weeps, and shivers in despair.

In vain his awed attendants try  
Full many a royal remedy,  
Rare gums and cordials, herbs and roots—  
All medicative mountain fruits  
Renowned for potency to heal  
Afflicted life. The priests appeal  
To temple gods.

Distressed and prone,  
Their faces in the dust, bemoan  
The people their belovèd chief;  
They smite their loyal breasts for grief,  
And weeping wander to and fro.

“Why wail the people? What swift woe  
Doth chase the tears down warrior cheeks?”

A captive slave it is, who speaks—  
A poor Xibalban, won in war,  
A self-forgetful questioner.

“Oxac, our mighty chief must die,”  
Replies the guard with downcast eye ;  
“A fever boils his blood, his brain  
Is fired with fury—hope is vain !”

“O say not thus ! there is a weed  
In virtue great as is the need  
Of stricken Oxac. In my land  
’T is native, and with careful hand  
Oft gathered—e’en in yonder dell  
Perchance it grows ! I know it well—  
O bid me seek it !”

“Go !” out-spoke  
The guard, and quick his fetters broke ;  
“Go, haste thee ! bring the gracious weed !  
Life, death, according to thy deed  
Thy recompense.”

Bowed low the slave  
And sped away. Ye gods, vouchsafe  
Him guidance ! on a trembling breath  
Hangs his eternity ! life, death !







## CANTO X.

### THE FEVER WEED.

WHAT long and patient search he makes  
By sedgy pools with border brakes  
In still recesses sleeping late  
Beyond the morning, nooks ornate  
With leafy spray, the hiding-place  
Of stranger blooms that in his face  
Do stare—sweet creatures bright and bold !  
He heeds them not, they do not hold  
His destiny.

How anxiously  
He treads his way ! no cliff so high  
He cannot climb, no dell so deep  
He may not dare, though serpents creep  
Among the dark vines poisonous—  
Perchance they guard his treasure thus—  
Ah, see ! the tiny plant he spies !  
Success out-flashes from his eyes,  
And crushing 'neath his heel defeat,  
He plucks it—'t is a meek-eyed cheat !  
By fields where late the zea maize stood,  
Up hill aslant, through tangled wood,

So true, and purposeful, and strong,  
No path seems difficult or long.

On, on, till strength and hope decline,  
And day has reached the boundary line  
Of twilight, and the fever weed  
Unfound ! Perhaps beyond its need  
Great Oxac now—then what remains ?  
With cruel mockery and chains  
The sterner fate to failure fixed—  
A bitter portion all unmixed  
With pity.

For a moment stood  
The wavering slave, wide was the wood—  
Might he not flee ? why should he die—  
And life so dear ? In agony  
He prostrate fell.

“ O thou,” he cried,  
“ To whom this place is sacred, hide,  
Or smite me with thine awful rod,  
Nor prove thyself a vengeful god  
In whom a stranger cannot trust.”

“ Quizquo is merciful and just.”

Amazed, he sprang upon his feet  
And listened ! How tempestuous beat  
His heart—he heard it—nothing more !  
He peered about him ; all things bore  
A dumb behavior, and he felt  
The night draw round him like a belt,

Chill, tightening, holding fast his breath !  
Had Oxac's spirit freed by death,  
Disrobed to walk the trackless air,  
Vindictive come to mock his prayer ?  
A sudden horror seized his soul !  
His eyes instinctive sought the ghoul  
Where shadows walked among the trees  
Down shaken by the evening breeze ;  
Peered cautiously from side to side,  
But nought of spectral shape he spied.

Then suddenly his soul grew strong—  
Remembering that no taint of wrong  
Imbued it, that no evil thought  
Concerning Oxac, was inwrought  
With service well, but vainly done,  
Though dark the doom his zeal had won.  
Again upon the leaf-strewn sod  
He bowed and prayed :

“Great mountain God

If aught thy pity may command,  
Know thou, a captive in strange land,  
In dire extremity doth plead  
Thine aid to find the fever weed  
For stricken Oxac—lest he die !—  
O speed his foot, and guide his eye,  
Thou great unknown—his only trust—”

“Our only trust ! Quizquo is just !”—  
As if an echo did repeat  
Its pretty measure.

To his feet  
Again he sprang, his prayer forgot,  
Dispatched his senses to the spot  
Whence seemed the sound, a symphony  
Of word and tone so faint, so nigh !  
“ Ye gods, forgive a mortal ear ! ”  
He whispered, bending low to hear.

“ Quizquo is good ; yon pretty star  
That through this rifted roof I see,  
His love hath summoned from afar,  
To watch and shine for me,  
For long the night may be.

“ Quizquo is great and good, beside  
What need a simple maiden know ?  
Contented in his care I bide  
Until he bids me go—  
Himself the way will show.

“ Quizquo is merciful ; he draws  
His curtain closer, lest the light  
Should blind mine eyes ; because  
Of my imperfect sight  
He gives me rest and night.

“ Quizquo is good, and great, and just ;  
Enough—what would Zululu more ?  
Here will she tarry in sweet trust  
Until the night is o’er,  
And love shall ope the door.”

The plaintive measure seemed to die  
In waves of sweetness, like the sigh  
Of evening zephyr to the rose  
The while he rocks her to repose.

His fate forgotten, terror flown,  
No longer helpless and alone,  
For, came to him that soulful power  
Which sometimes crowns, in darkest hour.  
Inspired with purpose seemed the slave ;  
A moment's earnest heed he gave,  
Then carefully explored the ground  
Whence late exhaled that dream of sound,  
That melody so strangely sweet—  
He sought, and at his very feet  
A narrow fissure found, which led,  
Out-stretching like a sombre thread,  
Far up the hill-side. Tremblingly  
He kneeled and spake :

“Whate'er thou be—  
Earth-born or spirit—answer me.”

“A mortal answers : could she know  
Thou wert a friend, and not a foe ?”

“A foe to none am I. Beguiled  
By Oxac's need into this wild—”

“His need ! Oh, what is Oxac's need ?  
I am Zululu—Oxac's child !  
Say on—my hungry ears have greed.”

"All day the gods have whispered 'speed  
Thou vexèd spirit—speed away !'  
Disease hath touched him with decay,  
The fever on him feeds."

"Nay, nay !  
He must not die ! " Zululu cried,  
"Some remedy may yet be tried—"

"For which my life is pledged ; alas  
I cannot find it ! " Leaves and grass  
Back brushing as he spoke, down peered  
The captive ; all was dark and weird.

"Zululu, why in this strange spot ?  
Forth—haste to Oxac ! tarry not !  
Perhaps thy ministry may save  
His precious life ! " implored the slave.

"Then must he die. This cavern door  
Hath Quizquo shut ! Oh, never more,  
Perchance, shall poor Zululu see  
Her father's face ! "

"It shall not be !  
What though these granite doors are strong,  
The soul is stronger ! Powers malign  
Must yield !—My life, sweet maid, for thine ! "

"Yet stay ; I hide away from one  
I dare not wed—King Kayi's son.  
Methinks 't were better here to bide—"

"List ! Kaska ne'er will claim his bride."

He clasped the lovely hand that through  
The crevice reached to him.

“ Adieu,  
Zululu ! ” but no answering word ;  
A sigh that told of tears he heard,  
A piteous sigh that sped his flight ;  
He dashed away into the night  
Down, down the mountain’s rugged height,  
A pathless, treacherous way, but what  
Can hinder one who has forgot  
Fear, fate, himself ? or what control  
That strange delirium of the soul  
Broke loose from human impotence ?  
Poor cumbrous shape, and strictured sense,  
Plod on, your way is rough and new—  
The soul waits not to walk with you !

The lowland gained, his course he steered  
By evening star, until appeared  
The temple luminous, the pride  
Of Anahuac, the stranger’s guide  
To Iztaptec. Anon he neared  
The mighty walls by patience reared,  
By courage guarded ; but alas !  
Within the city gates could pass  
Unchallenged none.

Uncertain clung  
The answer to his stammering tongue ;  
The rough guard marked it, and not less  
His unaccustomed air and dress.  
Suspicion said “ A foe thou art ! ”

And swift and straight the hurtling dart  
Was sped and buried in his breast ;  
He fell—no cry his pain expressed,  
Yet low he murmured :

“ Thus to die  
With sealèd lips ; ye gods deny  
Life, liberty to me, all bliss,  
Whate’er ye will, but grant me this,  
A heaven for her, a swift release  
To fair Zululu ! courage ! peace  
Poor heart ! perchance some kindly ear  
May catch thy cry.”

’T was heard, drew near  
The guards and gave gruff audience.

“ For Oxac’s sake—O bear me thence  
Within the city ! Staunch this flow !  
A little breath—the chief shall know  
Where hides his child—ah me—too—late ! ”

Strong hands push back the ponderous gate  
And bear his bleeding form within,  
And crowding round him seek to win  
His spirit back. With fibrous twines  
Tie up his wounds, nutritious wines  
Bestow, and gentle food.

Attent  
They wait the slow arbitrament  
Of life with death, till as from sleep  
He rouses.

“ Do the people weep ?



Oxac—lives he ? I pray you say  
He lives ! ”

“ He lives.”

“ Then haste away—  
O *haste* and bring his child—’t is she—  
Her very lips did answer me  
From darksome cave in yonder wild,  
‘ I am Zululu, Oxac’s child ! ’—  
Can nought your sluggish natures stir ?  
Ye cowards ! Will none rescue her ?  
Then I—stand back—nay, let me go ! ”

He sought to rise,—as if a blow  
Had smitten him, he swooned, and fell  
Into a long dim interval  
Of silence, and he would not wake,  
Nor heed their questions, nor unmake  
The wonderment his broken speech  
Had wrought, but held beyond their reach,  
A key which might unlock the day  
To Oxac, who benighted lay  
In heavy slumbers, moaning low  
Of lost Zululu—for his woe  
Slept not, and his attendants deemed  
His grief but greater when he dreamed.





## CANTO XI.

### THE SEARCH.

LONG hours unconscious lay the slave ;  
Save that he breathed no sign he gave  
Of life, but looked as one long dead.  
He heeded not the guard who said :

“Base treachery is here ! this slave  
But sought his worthless life to save  
By falsehood ; gave his word to bring  
A fever-weed, some useless thing  
His people prize, the which should cure  
Our stricken chief ! the forfeiture  
Was death—which he accepted. See !  
He brings no royal remedy,  
But comes with mutterings false and wild  
Of forest, cavern, Oxac’s child !  
Perchance he prates of Quizquo’s cave  
To lure us thither—cursèd knave !  
Gods ! I would smite him, but to save  
His life for sorer punishment.”

Some answered “So ” ; and some low bent  
And looking in his face nought said ;

Some stood apart and shook the head,  
While some strode wrathfully around,  
And others gazed upon the ground.

At length a youthful brave stepped forth ;  
The cold, dread courage of the north  
Was his, and hot young blood.

“ A slave

Has called us cowards ! and we save  
Our answer till his emptied veins  
Refill, that he may reap the gains  
Of treachery. Why doom him thus ?  
Those whom the gods count valorous  
Are just ; and justice bids us heed  
His broken story, and with speed  
Yon forest search, and with such care  
The maiden shall be found—if there.  
Though idle words were those that fell  
From craven lips, yet do we well,  
O brother braves ? To her retreat  
The gods direct our willing feet ! ”  
The words of Atzol.

Answered none

By yea, or nay, but one by one,  
A deedful few their places took  
Beside the youth.

The babbling brook

Sings not its source through summer's drought.  
Mute force is mighty, working out,  
The grand designs of nature. Power  
Is deed, when duty strikes the hour.

They formed, a hardy zealous band ;  
Each warrior held a flaming brand,  
And each his ready weapon bore,  
And all were silent.

Round and o'er  
The night was thick, and hushed, and late,  
But every heart was desperate  
With purpose, and each black eye burned  
With energy which dared or spurned  
The hinderments of circumstance.  
What eager ear ! what sidelong glance !

Stout natures sometimes reap disgrace  
From trifles ; very pigmies chase  
The man in armor who o'erthrows  
In awful needs gigantic foes !

A nameless terror chilled each brave  
As wound their way toward Quizquo's cave,  
For footprints from the dingle deep  
Led on and up the wooded steep  
To thickest shade.

Now, near the ground  
Their torches flare and circle round  
The astonished trees, to which the light  
Long hours before had said " Good-night."  
A broken twig, a new bent blade,  
A leaf's displacement in the shade,  
A low crushed lichen quivering yet,  
Because some foot had late been set  
Upon it, said " This way he went."

They understood, pressed on, content  
With roughest toil could they but trace  
His wanderings to the hiding-place  
Of lost Zululu.

                    All confessed  
As leader in the doubtful quest  
Young Atzol, whose harangue had won  
Their dumb approval ; counselled none  
This course or that, but as he led  
They followed.

                    With observant tread  
He sometimes moved, and sometimes stood  
Erect and questioned close the wood  
With sense acute, or in his might  
Advanced, far flashing left and right  
His fiery brand.

                    “ Ha ! What strange thing  
Here flutters like a red-bird’s wing  
Among these brambles fell and bold ? ”  
He said, and plucked it from the hold  
Of thorny fingers. ’T was a shred  
Of some gay-colored stuff. A thread  
Of fringe clung to it, and betrayed  
The part.

                    “ Methink’s Zululu’s maid  
Had mantle bordered thus ! ” one cried.  
Another viewed it and replied :  
“ Of Bacca’s mantle ’t is a part ! ”

Thereat spake Atzol : “ Be each heart  
By this assured ; about this place

Be every nook and dream of space  
Severely searched." All gave assent  
And forth by paths divergent went.

Like those who listen, awed and prone  
To catch the earthquake's undertone,  
So Atzol bowed him to the ground,  
With ear expectant set. Profound  
The silence, till at length up-crept  
A quavering breath. He started ; swept  
The drifted leaves with blaze of light.  
When, lo ! discovered to his sight  
A fissure, sinuous and dark !  
With curious eye he stooped to mark  
Its meaning, when a sobbing sound  
Arose as from the rifted ground.

"Whom holds this dungeon ?" loud he cried,

"Zululu," one low-voiced replied,  
"And good old Bacca ;—other seems  
The tone—not that which all my dreams  
And prayers have thrilled since yester eve—  
Would 't were the same !"

That she did weave  
Strange words into her answer, what  
To those who understood them not,  
Whose earnest souls were only stirred  
For her release ?

Prompt was the word,  
And brave the deed, as stroke on stroke

Their huge stone hammers beat and broke  
Through walls of earth and granite gray,  
The cavern opening to the day—  
To those entombed the world without.  
When gentle feet stepped forth, a shout  
Proclaimed through all the dark profound,  
“Zululu ! Oxac’s child, is found !”

Bright streamed the autumn sunshine down ;  
Late morning lay upon the town,  
Ere Atzol’s gallant equipage  
Swept through the gates—its final stage  
With triumph rounded. Warriors strong  
Wrought glad delirium in the throng  
By acclamation long and wild  
In honor of their chieftain’s child.  
All nature seemed to catch the thrill  
Of joyance, vale and vocal hill  
Awoke and echoed long applause ;  
The birds sang new sweet tunes, because  
Of fair Zululu—homeward borne !  
And when with sweet face sorrow worn,  
Down from the birchen chair she stepped,  
Full many a gray-haired matron wept  
For very joy that she was found,  
While happy children strewed the ground  
With flowers.

Poor child ! she could not heed  
Or cheers, or tears, or loving deed  
Of artless childhood. Swift she flew  
To Oxac’s chamber—but he knew

Her not, nor answered when she spake,  
Beseeching him with tears to wake.

Long time beside his couch she stands,  
His burning brow with tender hands  
Soft soothing ; but while yet she waits  
And weeps and prays, the fever bates,  
And Oxac wakens ; lo ! 't is she—  
Zululu—mute with misery  
And love's solicitude !

Her eyes  
To all his doubts give glad replies—  
Enough ! He clasps her to his breast  
And holds her close, then fearful lest  
His senses cheat him, bids her speak ;  
He strokes her hair, and feels her cheek,  
Her soft hand presses, calls her name  
O'er and again, while hint of blame  
Intones his accent, as if still  
Her presence answers not his will.

At length o'erwrought he sleeps, to wake  
Refreshed. To other hearts that ache,  
Bring sweet repose, O blessed sleep !  
And gently close the eyes that weep.







## CANTO XII.

### THE TRIAL.

SO Oxac of his malady  
Was healed, and on an early day  
He rose and thanked the gods, and bore  
To temple altars princely store  
Of sacrificial fruits, and there  
Devoutly worshipped.

High in air,  
Soft overlapping fold on fold,  
Thick clouds of odorate incense rolled  
Like prayers of white-robed souls that fling  
Sweet benedictions from the wing  
Spread heavenward, marking as they rise  
The spirit's highway to the skies.

As if to some great festival  
The people gathered, proving well  
Their loyalty and gratitude—  
Was not great Oxac's life renewed,  
Zululu found ?

No woe to check  
Her happiness had Iztapec,

And all the land had joy again ;  
Staid matrons, lion-hearted men,  
Youths, maidens, children,—all were glad.  
In garb fantastic some were clad,  
Invoking mirth by dance and game ;  
While ever and anon the name  
Of Oxac woke the loyal cheer  
So grateful to a ruler's ear.  
And ever and anon, uprose  
A shout which over vanquished foes  
Inherited to old Nahuatl braves.  
Far heights responsive flung the waves  
Of tumult back, and with the shout  
The name of Kaska, wreathed about  
With scorn ; till when, Zululu nought  
Had known of deadliest battle fought—  
And Kaska slain ! But there she stood,  
A fair strong type of maidenhood  
How tempest shaken !

To the chief  
She trembling clung. Somewhat of grief  
To pity softened made her weep—  
Resolving Kaska's name to keep,  
Enshrined by memory with pure  
And sacred things, from scorn secure.  
E'en as she wept, to Oxac pressed  
A warrior with the foul request :

“ Great chief, this proud occasion cries  
Aloud for fitting sacrifice.  
Unnumbered southern slaves await

Long servitude or swifter fate  
On smoking altars. One by one,  
Dost bid us offer to the Sun  
Their proud warm hearts ? ”

“ O never yet

Our sacred altars have been wet  
With human blood,” Oxac replied.  
“ Enough that fair Xibalba’s pride  
Is humbled for a crime not hers !  
Enough, her sons are servitors  
To strangers.”

Bowing low his head,  
“ Oxac hath spoken,” Murzi <sup>62</sup> said,  
As if his spirit were subdued,  
Yet still in abject attitude  
Remained till Oxac bade him speak.

“ Most gracious chief. I do but seek  
The just enforcement of just laws  
For crimes committed. This my cause ;  
Among the captives there is one  
Who dared—what never can be done—  
To blind old Murzi ! Treachery  
Demands sore punishment ; with me  
He broke his faith. For Oxac’s need  
He pledged to bring a fever weed,  
Some sure specific known to bate  
The fever fire, but, lingering late,  
Brought only fabrications wild,  
And tangled stories of thy child—  
Full tender pratings for a *slave* ! ”

“Then shall he die ! but bring the knave.  
Unjudged shall pass no weakling’s cause,  
If guilty, stern and just our laws.”

Soon came old Murzi ; petty power,  
Which crowns the craven for an hour  
Of tyranny, had stamped the sign  
Of cruelty on every line  
And feature of his swarthy face ;  
A human fiend, without one grace  
Of human sympathy was he ;  
A hateful, blackened mystery  
Of life which should be white ! So sin  
Consuming all the good within,  
Disfigures all without.

Fell back

The clamorous crowd—a narrow track  
The guards held open to the court  
Toward which the hapless slave, the sport  
And curse of all, was rudely pressed.  
Whom thus the angry chief addressed.

“Ha ! art thou he whose word is nought,  
Who pledged to bring, but never brought,  
The fever weed ? Who dared to teach  
Thy captive tongue to frame in speech  
*My daughter’s name—full tenderly ?*  
Accursèd slave ! speak ! Art thou he ?”

With wrath was Oxac’s eye aflame,  
The slave drew up his well-built frame

To fullest stature, from the ground  
His clear eyes raised. His arms were bound,  
His feet were bare, a ghastly wound  
Was in his breast, his garment rent  
And stained with blood. On him were bent  
Unnumbered hateful eyes, which fed  
Upon his anguish.

Battle bred,  
His savage heart to pity steeled,  
Or in the court, or on the field  
Nahuan power was terrible !

“ Great chief, thou bidd’st me answer. Nay,  
I am not he ! doth Murzi say  
One broke his faith ? I am not he.  
A captive’s tongue touched wantonly  
Thy daughter’s name ? I am not he !—  
My soul stands forth defiantly  
To meet the charge ! Yet wherefore tell  
My story ? Murzi knows full well  
He wrongs me, and the gods know all ! ”

A low, mad murmuring filled the hall,  
Which spread, and quickening louder swelled.  
A frown from Oxac promptly quelled  
The outbreak.

“ Take this captive hence  
To deepest dungeon, recompense  
Awaits him ! ”

At the word, ’t was done ;  
The glad day waned, low flamed the sun

And passed away with fair adieu.  
The people from their mirth withdrew  
To humble homes and rugged rest ;  
Within the palace proud forms pressed  
Voluptuous couches. Thick and wide  
Night's ebon curtain fell.

Untried

No soul is strong—no life all white  
Unwashed by dews of sorrow's night.  
No love, whate'er its boast, is true,  
That cannot walk the furnace through—  
Some seven-fold trial without loss.  
The purest faith wreathes fair the cross,  
And holds it dearer than the crown.  
The bliss unblighted by earth's frown  
Is born of sacrifice.





### CANTO XIII.

SOME CAUSES WILL BE HEARD AGAIN.

DAMP, lone  
The dungeon, where on bed of stone  
The captive crouched ; yet by and by  
He slept and dreamed. An azure sky  
Was o'er him, there were flowers and trees,  
And murmurings of summer seas,  
And spicy breezes, and bright birds  
Whose songs were miracles—sweet words  
Which through his charmèd senses stole  
Into the chambers of the soul,  
And thrilled him with such strange delight  
He wakened—lo, his room was bright !  
A lovely form was o'er him bent  
And one was whispering.

“ Punishment  
For deed like thine—O brave true heart !  
For though I know not whence thou art  
Nor whom, yet thou didst save me, thou ! ”  
She laid her soft hand on his brow  
And gazed into his eyes—her own  
Were full of tears, her gentle tone

Was tremulous, her unbound hair  
Lay on his breast.

“ O vision fair !  
O blessed eyes that on me beam !  
O matchless, sweet, bewildering dream—  
How dost thou mock me ! ”

“ Nay, not so ;  
No dream is this to mock thy woe—  
Only Zululu, whose distress  
Companions all thy wretchedness.”

“ Zululu—and she pities *me* ? ”

“ Would hand of mine might set thee free !  
Yet much I fear thy hapless fate ;  
My father knows not to abate  
His ire, and Murzi maddened him.  
Too well I read it in his dim  
But angry eyes. Alas when wrong  
Confuses judgment, and the strong  
To cravens yield ! Of what avail  
Is mercy's plea, or sorrow's wail,  
In such an hour ? Oh, then, how weak  
Is woman, though her heart doth speak !  
Power hath a voice for heavy ears,  
That drowns the eloquence of tears.  
And yet the gods judge not as men—  
Some causes will be heard again,  
And rulings of these lower courts  
Be set aside. Heaven's law comports



With truth, while at the bar above,  
The mightiest advocate is love."  
The captive smiled. "Thy loving thought  
Hath surely for my spirit wrought  
Release ; in solitude or death,  
My wasted cheek will feel thy breath,  
Thy tender words will charm my ear,  
The radiance of thy beauty clear  
My clouded sky ! I cannot know  
Henceforth the quality of woe.  
Whate'er my fate, remembering thee  
Zululu, 't will be heaven to me !"

"Perhaps to-morrow thou must die !—  
If so, I know in yonder sky  
Thou crowned shalt be."

"There free from blame  
Might I but breathe Zululu's name—"

"How would she list and make reply ?"

"Gods 't were a blissful thing to die !"

"Thy *life*—for this shall be my prayer."

She softly stroked his raven hair,  
And o'er his wounded bosom spread  
His tattered robe ; then plucked a thread  
From out its border ; next her heart  
She hid it, as some magic art  
It held ; the while the poor slave lay  
So wafted from his woe away

His tongue forgot all forms of speech.  
He seemed to stand on some bright beach  
Where sails are set for paradise !  
A moment's bliss—but gone ! his eyes  
Flashed sudden pain.

“ Nay, to despair  
O leave me, dearest ! thou dost dare  
Great peril, coming thus alone  
To this vile place ! ”

“ Aye, if 't is known  
Alone thou diest not ! but well  
Is bribed the kind old sentinel,  
My foot is heedful, heavily  
The city sleeps ; fear not—for me  
The gods will care.

The hour grows late—  
Yet know, brave heart, though thou should'st die  
Death never bars the morning gate  
To holiest love ; and by and by  
'T will ope for me. But now adieu.”  
A signal—back the huge door drew  
And closed again, and she was gone.

A long thick night, a slow gray dawn,  
Then came the day ; with rosy hand  
She scattered sunshine o'er the land,  
And sipped her dew with smiles so bright,  
'The beverage sparkled into light.

Refreshment feigning from repose,  
Zululu with the morning rose

And donned her court apparel flecked  
With brilliancies, her round arms decked  
With bands impearled, her pretty feet  
Dressed daintily, adorned with sweet  
Autumnal blooms her tressy hair,  
And o'er her shoulders flung a rare  
Embroidered mantle seldom worn,  
By regal elegance forsworn  
Familiar uses.

“ Bacca, nay !  
Know only this, that I to-day,  
By all the arts love can devise,  
Would be most pleasing in his eyes—  
And yet, I may not please him ! so,  
My girdle tie—now let me go,  
Lest soon my trembling limbs refuse  
To bear me hence. No childish dews  
Must blind mine eyes—my tongue must speak  
Articulate—upon my cheek  
Must flash no feeling ! I must still  
This fluttering heart—I can—I will !

“ Great peril ? I would undertake  
All peril—all things for thy sake  
Brave heart ! poor slave !—ah ! said I—what ?  
I pray you, Bacca, heed it not,  
My soul is vexed with troublous things,  
And idle thoughts take ready wings.”





## CANTO XIV.

### A PLEA FOR LIFE.

OXAC was early in the court,  
And there she sought him. To comport  
With reverent customs she must bide  
His leisure.

At the chieftain's side  
A dozen veteran warriors stood,  
And one seemed speaking ; audience good  
Gave Oxac, for he did not hear  
Zululu's footstep ; half in fear  
She softly stole into the shade  
A massive pillar cast, and laid  
A hush on clamorous distress.  
She could not hope to gain access  
To Oxac's side without delay,  
Nor unobserved, to steal away.  
" Alas 't is Murzi—all is lost ! "  
She murmured, as a dark form crossed  
The outer court ; his grave advance  
She marked with pallid countenance,  
But sought to hush her heart—to hear  
Or hopeful word, or doom austere,

For one in thrall ! Though Oxac spake  
The words her heart would glad or break  
No meaning bore they to her ear.

“ O gods,” she breathed, “ by this dear sign  
Lead on.”

And from its bosomed shrine  
She drew, and to her pale lips pressed  
The crimson relic. On her breast  
Low drooped her head like one in prayer  
When hope is challenged by despair.  
Thus shadowed by the column old,  
Herself as motionless and cold,  
She stood some anguished minutes ; when  
Her absent soul came back again,  
How silent was the council hall !  
Murzi was gone, the chieftain, all—  
But whither ?

With a startled cry  
Like children when the lamps go out  
And all is night in earth and sky—  
With none to kiss away the doubt,  
To hold the hand, and banish fear,  
With “ child, eternal Love is here ”—  
Zululu, frenzied with affright,  
Upstart ! peering left and right—  
Along the corridor she flew,  
Here, there, upon the courtier’s view  
Like sudden sunshine bursting through  
A hurrying cloud of summer time,  
Her footfalls waking sweetest chime,

Until the chieftain she espied ;  
He saw, and called her to his side ;  
Her presence was a glad surprise,  
She read it in his love-lit eyes.  
She smiled, and to her pretty cheek  
The dimples came ; in silence meek  
She stood till Oxac first should speak,  
Their custom such, and then with words  
As musical as woodland birds  
She filled his ears, repeating oft  
Endearing phrase in accent soft.  
Brief pauses, artless pleasantries  
And happy answers, framed to please,  
Instarred some moments of delay.  
At length, but with her eyes away,  
As if her heart were other where,  
Though all her soul was full of prayer :

“ My father—priceless boon I crave ”—

“ Say on, my child.”

“ His life ! the slave ”—

“ The slave ! what *slave* indeed can claim  
Zululu’s care ? well may hot shame  
Burn thus thy cheek ! what slave ? reply !  
For by my word the wretch shall die.”

“ Alas ! I only know ’t is he  
Whom cruel Murzi wrongs, the same  
Whom Quizquo sent to succor me :  
O nought of treachery or blame

Doth stain his soul ! 't is he whose feet  
Drew near the door of my retreat,  
Else had I perished. If his fate  
Be unpronounced—if not too late—  
O Father—say he shall not die ! ”

“ Too late.”

She caught the stern reply  
And fell as if his clenched hand  
Had struck her down. His cold command  
Thrice given she heeded not, though heard—  
“ Zululu, rise ! ”

Tone, look, and word,  
The triple shaft sent not amiss,  
Had struck with strange paralysis  
Her warm young life.

Transfixed, amazed,  
Old Oxac on his daughter gazed.  
Cold, tearless, motionless ; all hushed  
Her passion plea ! a blossom crushed  
By icy hand were not more dead  
To warmth and light, its sweet soul fled—  
And yet not dead was she ; for long  
The heart will throb, the pulse beat strong  
When all that makes life glad and warm  
Is frozen in some awful storm.

Till now, her every thought and sense  
Had yielded prompt obedience,  
Nor ever deemed his dictate ill,  
Nor dared the deadline of his will.

“ Too late ! ”

She lies with breast unstirred  
By hope or fear, while Oxac's word  
On dumb rebellion falls and dies  
Unnoticed. Anger, scorn, surprise,  
Compassion, love his great soul seize  
And swift through all their fixed degrees  
Lead down to tenderness.

“ My child !

What evil influence hath beguiled  
Thy peace and wrought this hour of ill ?  
Speak, daughter ! why so cold and still ?  
Zululu ! ”

But her eye is set  
On nothingness, a dead regret  
That wakes no sigh.

“ Alas, some spell

Demoniac and terrible  
Hath won her ! ”

Filled with strange alarms  
The father lifted in his arms  
His stricken child and fled with haste  
Forth, toward the temple. Eager-faced  
The people followed.

“ Or in grief

Or wrath goes forth our mighty chief ? ”  
They questioned, though all tongues were mute.  
Proud forms in homage absolute  
Were bowed, he heeded none, nor aught,  
Until his ear confusion caught,  
Made dreadful with the shout of doom,

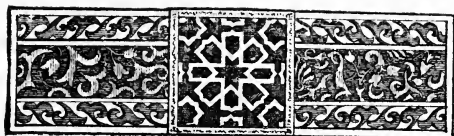


As soldiers, from his dungeon gloom  
Led forth the captive slave to die.

Upon the savage pageantry  
The victim gazed. From some far height  
His eye had caught a steadfast light,  
His breast the calm of courage born ;  
His proud lips wore a noble scorn  
Of deeds ignoble. Threat and thrall,  
The enginery of torture, all—  
He scorned them, aye and death ; so strong  
Becomes the soul inured to wrong  
And fired by love, that from its track  
Pain flees, and life itself stands back.

Much marvelling that he trembled not,  
They led him to the fatal spot,  
A broad low mound of ashen earth  
Where not a blade of green had birth,  
And bound him to a beam of oak,—  
A ponderous beam by flame and smoke  
Oft charred and blackened, it bespoke  
The lengthened torture to be wrought !





## CANTO XV.

### FULFILMENT.

ERE yet the lighted brand was brought  
A silence signal, Murzi gave,  
And stepping forth addressed the slave

“Seek not, O guilty wretch, to die  
As die the brave, nor dare defy  
The god of justice ; ere too late,  
Confess thy crimes commensurate  
With stern award.”

The captive turned—  
His breath came quick, his clear eye burned  
With passion’s fire.

“Contemtuons knave !  
Thy words become thee, noble brave !  
The gods thy virtues mark !—confess ?  
Aye, if to soothe Oxac’s distress,  
My service wearisome and long  
Though fruitless—be a grievous wrong ;  
And if it be a crime more base  
To find, unsought, the hiding-place  
Of lost Zululu—”

“ List ! that tone !  
In Quizquo’s cavern dark and lone  
It spoke me life—it is the same !  
Methinks one called Zululu’s name,”  
The maiden murmured, but the slave  
Heard not her words.

“ Yet know, old brave,  
Zululu loves me ! by and by,  
My fetters broken, I shall fly  
Beyond the shadows, and await  
Her coming at the morning gate—  
Mine own Zululu ! ”

“ Aye, ’t is he !  
Dear heart—Zululu dies with thee ! ”  
She cried, and sprang from Oxac’s hold  
Like some bright spirit uncontrolled,  
And instant to the captive flew,\*  
Her jewelled arms around him threw,  
Her soft cheek to his bosom pressed ;

“ Thus, Murzi, is my love confessed !  
My strength and purpose here are shown—  
For know, he shall not die alone ! ”

In faces stern, and scarred, and old,  
Her young eyes flashed defiance bold.  
The guard astonished, quailed as those  
Who smite in dreams immortal foes,  
From whom their puny blows rebound  
Without an echo.

O'er and 'round,  
A miracle of silence fell—  
A moment awful with the spell  
Of indecision.

Then was heard  
An unimpassioned, low-voiced word  
From Oxac—and one sped and brought  
A gorgeous mantle richly wrought,  
And laid it in the chieftain's hand,  
Who with a gesture of command  
Approached and spake :

“ Since to defy  
The royal edict, is to die—  
Accept thy doom, O hapless child !  
This wretch ignoble, and defiled  
By crime—if thou with him wilt die—  
Shall wear a robe of royalty,  
This glittering robe-befitting thine,  
Lost daughter of a noble line !  
Then—thou hast said it—by his side,  
Zululu, shall thy love be tried ! ”

At Oxac's word, away they tore  
His garment, shred, and stained with gore,  
All heedless of the quivering flesh,  
And ghastly wound from which afresh  
By rough hands prompted, trickled down  
Bright drops upon his bosom brown—  
When lo ! a gorget “ one espied  
And plucked it. Oxac, eager-eyed,  
Observed it carefully, and then

With searching eyes the slave—again  
The coin examined ! O'er and o'er  
Close scanned the curious seal it bore—  
The legend sought to read in vain,  
So dizzy grew old Oxac's brain !  
Then to the slave :

“Speak ! by whose hand  
Was this bestowed ?”

“At thy command  
I answer, else my lips were sealed,  
My name and lineage unrevealed.  
My father, good King Kayi, placed  
That sign upon my breast ; disgraced,  
Condemned, yet am I Kayi's son,  
Oribó.”

“Gods ! what day ill-starred  
Is this ? What dreadful deeds are done  
To be repented !”

Oxac cried ;  
And thrusting back the quaking guard  
Sprang quickly to the victim's side—  
Caught cruel Murzi's gleaming blade  
And smote his fetters, and unmade  
The captive.

'T was a gracious deed  
To fling the nuptial robe decreed  
For Kaska, o'er the astonished youth.  
“Ingemmed with innocence and truth,  
And priceless love—'t is thine, O son  
Of Kayi ! and this treasure won  
From Oxac—thine—with all her charms !”

He said, and to Oribo's arms  
Released for rapturous embrace,  
The maiden turned, her soulful face  
Aglow with love—how pure, divine,  
Oribo understood ; no word  
Save but " Zululu ! " " Ever thine ! "  
The happy listening angels heard.

Thence Oxac to the palace led  
The blissful pair, his good gray head  
Uplifted into sunshine, where,  
So clear the light, so pure the air,  
No cloud his soul and sky between,  
He felt the hand of Love unseen  
Upon his brow, that bent to hear  
Soft echoes which his outer ear  
Had never caught. With wondering eyes  
Again those dark old prophecies  
He read—dream, sybil, bird—all held—  
Though strangely, slowly syllabled  
By years, a gracious meaning ; bright  
It burst upon his raptured sight.  
Bliss, brooded by a sombre wing !  
Within the captive was the king !

And when anon, with proud acclaim,  
Refreshed and rich apparelled came  
Oribo from the royal bath,  
The sun-god's smile illumed the path  
Which brought him to the nuptial feast  
To claim his bride. There sacred priest

With unctuous rite and solemn lore,  
Sealed him the chieftain's son ! Aye more,  
His blessing, heritage of power  
Gave Oxac as his daughter's dower.

Some seasons more, a peaceful few,  
And Oxac quietly withdrew  
Into his summer house of rest,  
From whence his mighty soul uprose,  
Recalled to regions of the blessed,  
Beyond the bound of earthly woes,  
To share the chariot of the sun—  
The grand award his life had won.

The oracle was verified.  
As slave, Oribo won his bride—  
As king he led her to a throne  
His queen, where long her beauty shone  
Resplendent, and her gentle name  
To peerless virtues linked, became  
The honored theme of olden song.  
Good King Oribo well and long  
Ruled Anahuac. But soft, speak low !  
Loud praise is not for those who rest  
From work well done ! Enough to know  
In stillest chamber sleep is best !  
And theirs—ah, well, so long ago  
The gods received them, nought can break  
Their slumber till His word " Awake "  
Bespeaks the morning.

What to them

The sceptre and the diadem,  
The rise and fall of empires ? what  
The countless loves of countless years  
Since they through sorrows, hopes, and fears  
Made blissful harbor ?

What avails  
To watch the waves, or count the sails,  
Or list the surging of the sea  
That beats eternal shores ?

Each bark  
Shall drift into a quiet lee,  
And calmly anchor in the dark.

Although in some brief hour, and bright,  
A distant sail we dimly sight  
And speak it—and it gives no heed—

What matter ? anchorage is sure !  
And though we strain our eyes to read  
The thought of time-dimmed tablature,  
Or ancient record, or would trace  
The footprints of a vanished race  
Where shadows lie which will not lift,  
We know through deepest mould and drift,  
Time holdeth these, and more, in trust,  
Much all immortal lives in dust.





## NOTES.

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1 Ä-nä-wak', meaning "near the water."

2 Anahuac is an extensive plateau situated in the centre of Mexico, at an average height of 7,000 feet above the level of the sea—raised by volcanic force between the two oceans.—*Lippincott's Pronouncing Gazetteer of the World.*

3 Ox'-äc.

4 The Mexicans punished with severity all the crimes which are particularly repugnant to nature, or prejudicial to the state.

5 Wherever nature, in the perpetual struggle of matter to restore an equilibrium, assumes *power* there they (primitive peoples) are sure to locate a god.

6 Popocatepetl, pronounced Pó-pó-kä-ta-petl', meaning "smoking mountain."

7 The peaceful and semi-civilized Toltecan-man was once the proud master of our continent, which he busily dotted with forts and mounds, with mighty monuments and great cities.—*Schoolcraft's Aboriginal Races.*

8 Iztaptec, pronounced Ēz'-tä-pāk.

9 Pictography was employed not only to beautify the inner walls of temples and palaces, but also to record historical events and religious rites.

10 Zululu, pronounced Zoo-loo-loo.

11 In old paintings a female figure is represented with hair flowing in long tresses and adorned with jewels. The Toltecas were fond of wearing dresses of showy colors, and excelled in the fabrications of cloth and hangings.—*Kingsborough*.

12 Cholula, pronounced Cho-loo'-lä.

13 Nahuas, pronounced Na-hoo'-äs.

14 Quetzalcoatl, "Feathered Serpent." Date of his first appearance a little before the middle of the 1st century.

15 Quetzalcoatl, pronounced Ket-zäl-cow-attle.

16 Hue-Hue-Tlaplan, pronounced Hoo-ä' Hoo-ä' Tläp'-län.

17 Tamoanchan, pronounced Täm-o-än-shän'.

18 Tulla pronounced Yool'-yä.

19 Kayi, pronounced Kä'-ye.

20 Xibalba, pronounced He-bäl-bä.

21 Zinco, pronounced Zeen'-co.

22 The Mexicans taught their children, together with the arts, religion, modesty, honesty, sobriety, labor, love of truth and respect to superiors.

23 Bacca, pronounced Bäck-cä.

24 Kaska, pronounced Kaz-ka.

25 Votan, pronounced Vo'-tän, founder of the Maya culture. One of the great works of this hero was the excavation of a tunnel, "Snake-hole," from Zuqui to Tzequil.

26 Usumasintas, pronounced Oo-soo-mä-seen-täs.

27 Nachan, pronounced Nä-shän, city of serpents.

28 Maya, pronounced Mä-yä.

29 Kayi, pronounced Kä'-ye.

30 Chan, pronounced Shän, serpent.

31 Katun, pronounced Kä-toon, cycle of fifty-two years.

The Katun year consisted of twenty-eight weeks of thirteen days each, and *one additional day*.

32 Tetan, pronounced Ya-tän'.

33 Oribó pronounced O-ree-bo.

34 The rabbit was considered as a type of innocence.

35 The murder of Chaac Mal, a powerful sovereign of Chicken-Itza, by his brother Aac, is still told in stone. The funeral chamber, the mural paintings, the statues, and the monument of the murdered king, are found by the explorer. In the funeral chamber the terrible altercation between Aac and Chaac Mal is represented by large figures three fourths life-size.—*Dr. Le Plongeon*.

36 A tablet from the ruins at Palenque represents a beautiful youth arrayed in an elaborate military dress and plumed crest of magnificent character. He wears what appears to be a cuirass about his shoulders and chest.

37 Among the ruins at Palenqua are those of a palace 228 feet by 182, and about 30 feet in height. In the outer wall are forty doorways. The double cornices are highly artistic. This palace had double corridors. It is presumed that nearly all of the piers separating the doorways in the eastern wall of the palace were ornamented with stucco bas-reliefs. On the wall of its inner apartment is said to have been the most beautiful specimen of stucco relief in America. M. Waldec declares it worthy to be compared to the most beautiful work of the Augustan age.

38 They had in every city or village a public place or square appropriated for the traffic of everything which could supply the necessities and pleasures of life. Even merchandise had its particular place.

39 The ancient Mexicans had a superstition that in the last night of the fifty-second year of their cycle the sun would destroy the world.—*John Short*.

Their ancestors had from time immemorial admonished them that such years as succeeded each other after every interval of fifty-two years would be dangerous, unlucky, calamitous, on account of the universal deluge having taken place in such a year, and likewise darkness caused by an eclipse of the sun, and earthquakes everywhere.—*Kingsborough*.

40 Great attention was paid to the flight of birds. The carnivora, or battle-birds, were thought to be prescient of the times and places of conflict, and their gathering to fatten upon the dead on the battle-field was regarded with forebodings.

41 Quizquo, pronounced Queez'-ko.

42 The ancient Mexicans paid a superstitious reverence to the summits of high mountains which were perpetually covered with mists and dark clouds, believing them to be the abodes of their mountain gods.

43 The pointed mace or head-breaker was a most formidable weapon.

44 The great struggle was often at the gates in a desperate hand-to-hand encounter.

45 Tobacco was smoked by the ancient tribes. Their pipes, elaborately carved, differed from those of to-day chiefly by having no stems.

46 The men were very expert in the cutting and setting of precious stones.

47 Manabaho, pronounced Män-ä-bāz-ho', excelled in his superhuman and god-like feats. He killed the mammoth serpent and bear-king.

48 Papukewis, pronounced Păp-oo-kwees, could turn pirouettes until he raised a whirlwind.

49 Kwasind pronounced Kwä-seend, could twist off the strongest rope. These things were related to stimulate the physical powers of the young.

50 They were accustomed to decorate the inner walls of their temples with vermilion-red ochre. Flowers, fruits, heroes, gods, always the Feathered Serpent, were painted or sculptured on the walls.

51 Hurling stones was done with great skill and precision.

52 Murzi, pronounced Moor'-zee.

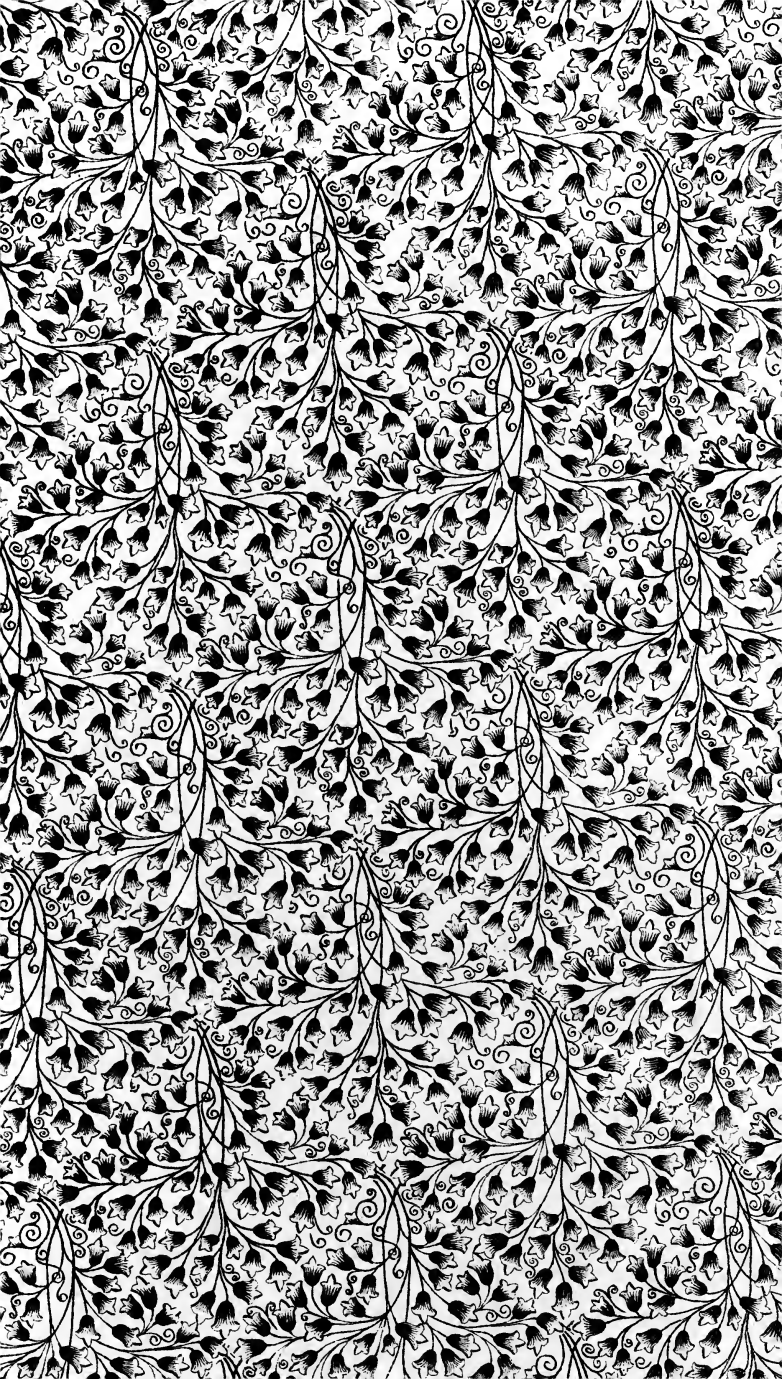
53 The ancient gorget or medal, bestowed as a mark of distinction, was highly prized by the possessor.

THE END.











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